

National Programme Natural Resources of The Netherlands

July 2010

1. Introduction

On 21 December 2005 the European Commission adopted the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. The Thematic Strategy identifies three problems associated with the use of natural resources. The greatest problem is the damage to ecosystems caused by the exploitation of natural resources. The second is their increasing scarcity and the third is the increasing emissions and waste resulting from their use. Everywhere, ecosystems that are a source of natural resources are being damaged by their exploitation. The scarcity of renewable resources leads to overexploitation and pressure on the ecosystems of which they are a part, and can eventually lead to their irreversible degradation. The Thematic Strategy seeks ultimately to promote the sustainable use of natural resources by completely breaking the link between economic growth and environmental degradation.

Member states are asked to prepare a national programme to implement the Thematic Strategy. These programmes should focus on natural resource uses with the greatest environmental impacts. A thematic strategy on waste was published at the same time as that on natural resources. The Commission sees the strategy on waste as a particular application of the natural resources strategy. The Thematic Strategy also announced the Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan, another step towards fleshing out the Strategy.

The Netherlands would like to see a coherent European policy to provide for economic growth without in any way increasing the environmental impact of the use of natural resources. The Thematic Strategy is meant to support the realisation of this goal, and complements a number of 'horizontal strategies'. The present document indicates how the Netherlands will follow up the Thematic Strategy at national level.

2. Natural resources: the issues

The greatest challenge facing The Netherlands in relation to natural resources is a global one, and results from the interplay of three global crises: the worldwide loss of biodiversity, climate change, and food shortages. The latter refers to the need to feed a growing and increasingly prosperous world population in the face of natural constraints, climate change, water shortages and market imperfections. These three crises and different aspects of them interact in many ways, and therefore need an integrated approach. This means that the way

one crisis evolves often has an impact on another. Examples are: 1) climate change, especially rising temperatures, can affect the availability of water and therefore agricultural production; 2) further reduction of biodiversity, for example as a result of deforestation, may cause an increase of greenhouse gas emissions and 3) increased livestock farming gives rise to an increase of greenhouse gas emissions. This interactivity between the three crises also creates scope for synergies that can increase policy effectiveness. Well-known examples are afforestation, which can both mitigate climate change and promote biodiversity, and agricultural practices that increase the amount of organic matter in the soil, thereby benefiting both soil fertility and climate.

The crises in biodiversity, climate and food are clear symptoms of the excessive stress to which humanity is subjecting ecosystems. This causes a deterioration in the quality of the services they provide to us. Degrading ecosystems mean an impairment of the life support function and of the outlook for economic development. In order to reverse this downward spiral, ecosystems and the services they provide need to be safeguarded. The protection of ecosystems therefore needs to underpin all social and economic policy objectives. The extraction of natural resources to meet our material needs is one of the main sources of pressure on ecosystems. We cannot function without these resources. Our challenge is to use them sustainably.

Humanity's present use of natural resources is not sustainable. This Programme proposes that the Netherlands at least takes responsibility for the pressures put on ecosystems worldwide by its use of natural resources. The Netherlands has a major impact on ecosystems in other countries and international waters through its commercial and fishing activities. The land area required for Dutch consumption is a good indicator of our impact on ecosystems beyond our boundaries. This area is about three times the surface area of the Netherlands, and this ratio is expected to rise still further in future. Some 45% of this total is for food and 55% for timber.¹ Land use is one of the main indicators of sustainability of consumption of natural resources because all human material needs require land to a greater or lesser degree. CO₂ emission is another such indicator.

The government sent a letter to EU Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik on 25 March 2010 enclosing the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) report 'Getting into the Right Lane for 2050'. This letter considered the challenge of providing nine billion people in 2050 with water, food, energy and other needs, while maintaining environmental

¹ *Sustainability Monitor for the Netherlands 2009* (The Hague: Statistics Netherlands, 2009), pp. 60-1

quality, combating climate change and halting the loss of biodiversity. The indicated approaches all point towards greater integration of different policy areas, leading in particular to more efficient use of arable land. A speech by Commissioner Potočnik on 23 March 2010 drew the same conclusion, expressing his intention to seek greater integration of policies on such issues as energy, transport, agriculture, fisheries and research.

3. Short history of natural resources policy

3.1 Dutch environmental policy

Dutch environmental policy was launched in 1972 with the Priority Memorandum on the Environment (*Urgentienota Milieuhygiëne*) which pointed to the link between environmental quality and public health. The first National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP-1) appeared in 1989 and established as its single overarching objective the closing of material loops. Subsequent years saw the identification of target groups and the apportionment of tasks between the different tiers of government. The public were enjoined to consume more responsibly ('A better environment begins with yourself'). In 1997 the Policy Document on the Environment and the Economy was published. This suggested for the first time that economic growth could go hand in hand with a decline in environmental pressure. Means of breaking the link between economic growth and environmental pressure included environmentally-friendly goods and services, efficient land use and internalising environmental costs in prices. This 'decoupling' was also a central pillar of NEPP-3 (1998).

In the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century it became clear that the implemented policies were very good at abating local and/or national emissions, but that global problems like climate change and biodiversity loss needed a different approach: an integrated one. Dutch consumption is often part of a chain involving the production of raw materials in another country, their transport and processing to make products which are then used and disposed of here, or exported. Merely cleaning up our link in the chain is not enough and does not make the whole chain sustainable.

NEPP-4 (2001) therefore argued that existing production and consumption merely transferred environmental problems to others, i.e. to other regions or to future generations. This problem shift needs to be stopped. NEPP-4 considered that it should be possible to make the transition to a sustainable society within 30 years. It recognised this would involve drastic social change and radical measures affecting the entire international system of production and consumption. An approach for making the necessary transition was launched, which united a long-term vision with a short-term agenda. NEPP-4 formulated the goal for 2030 of 'a safe and healthy life within an attractive living environment surrounded by

dynamic nature areas, without damaging biodiversity or exhausting natural resources'. To achieve this, we will need to innovate and decouple economic growth and environmental degradation over the entire life cycle.

3.2 EU policy

It is also recognised at the EU level that, along with the traditional environmental problems (air, water, soil and waste), there are transboundary problems which demand a new approach. The sixth Environment Action Programme (2002) therefore urged a more integrated approach. This programme covers the period 2002 to 2012 and specifies as priority areas: climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health, and natural resources and waste. The programme warns that the consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources must not exceed the carrying capacity of the environment. In order to prevent this, economic growth needs to be decoupled from environmental degradation. To ensure a more integrated approach, seven thematic strategies were announced, including the Thematic Strategy for Natural Resources.

The Thematic Strategy was published in 2005 as a Communication.² It does not set any specific objectives other than that the life-cycle environmental impacts of resource use should be reduced in a growing economy. One problem is how to measure environmental impacts. Kilograms of raw material used is not a good measure of environmental impact, and so the Netherlands and others have urged that a set of indicators, in addition to mass, should be considered that collectively give a good picture of environmental pressure over the entire life cycle. This approach is also advocated by the strategy. The strategy proposes the following actions:

1. The Commission develops indicators to evaluate the extent of the decoupling of environmental impacts from economic growth;
2. Member states draw up national programmes which focus on natural resource uses with the greatest environmental impacts. The Commission plans to set up a High-Level Forum to support this activity.
3. An 'International Panel on the sustainable use of natural resources' has been set up, aimed at assessing the global aspects of material flows.

The International Panel began work officially in 2007 under UNEP auspices. The Netherlands is playing an active part and is a member of the Panel steering group. There have been some initiatives in regard to national programmes, but there has been no

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0670:FIN:EN:PDF>

coordination by the Commission (the High-Level Forum has not been formed). The Commission is however currently developing indicators. Finally, it should be noted that the Commission will evaluate the strategy in 2010 and will then make new or supplementary proposals.

3.3 Global

There have also been several initiatives at international level. The European summit at Gothenburg (2001) adopted a declaration on the European Commission's Strategy for sustainable development. The OECD adopted a strategy in 2001 containing the objective of decoupling environmental pressure from economic growth. There are also numerous activities throughout the world arising from the Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992) to work together towards sustainable development.

3.4 Scope and priorities of this Programme

The Netherlands has informed the Commission that it would draw up a national programme. The House of Representatives was also informed of this intention, most recently in the report on the government-wide approach to sustainable development (KADO).³

Natural resources are all the naturally occurring elements which provide for the material needs of mankind and which contribute to national income. The national programme focuses primarily on the material flows and the environmental impacts of these flows rather than on the quality of the different sectors of the environment (air, water and soil) themselves, since the latter are the subject of regular environmental policy.

The materials considered are biomass, minerals, fossil fuels, metals and other materials. Statistics Netherlands keeps statistics based on an internationally agreed standard. The data for the period 1996-2006 (see box 1) show that although Dutch consumption is declining, the Netherlands is increasingly earning revenues by re-exporting materials after processing products in the Netherlands in ways that increase their added value. In line with NEPP-4 and the life-cycle approach, the Netherlands intends to accept responsibility for all materials entering or passing through the Netherlands (direct material input, DMI), including those subsequently re-exported, either unprocessed or in products. Obviously the Netherlands is not exclusively responsible for these flows. It is a link in the chain from extraction to the end users. The point is that the Netherlands will join with its partners both upstream (often

³ <http://static.ikregeer.nl/pdf/KST130773.pdf> (in Dutch)

Box 1

Material flows into and through the Netherlands

Material flows arise from domestic extraction, import and export. Table 1 shows material flows for the years 1996 and 2006 (in megatons).

Table 1: Material flows in the Netherlands in 1996 and 2006 in megatons (Mt). DMI means Direct Material Input, i.e. domestic extraction plus imports. DMC means Domestic Material Consumption, equal to DMI minus exports.

Over the period 1996-2006 DMC fell by 9% (from 278 to 256 Mt) despite strong growth in the Dutch economy over the period. This fall was due to reduced domestic extraction of non-metal minerals (particularly sand and gravel) and fossil fuels (natural gas). Imports of minerals on the other hand climbed by 32% (from 248 to 329 Mt). In consequence DMI rose by 10% (from 494 to 544 Mt). The growth in imports was accounted for by biomass (+20%), non-metal minerals (+32%), fossil fuels (+37%), metals (+37%) and other (+83%). However exports also grew strongly (+ 33%). This table gives only the extent of the flows, not their impacts.

Source: Environmental Accounts 2008 CBS (2009) <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/macro-economie/publicaties/publicaties/archief/2009/2008-c167-pub.htm>

developing countries) and downstream (often EU member states) in taking action to ensure that the entire lifecycle is sustainable.

3.5 Environmental impacts of material flows

Various studies show that the two categories with the greatest environmental impacts are fossil fuels and biotic materials.⁴ The consumption of fossil fuels notably causes CO₂ emissions and therefore climate change. The consumption of biotic fuels (food, fibres and biofuels) notably consumes land and water, thereby stressing ecosystems and biodiversity.

3.6 Greenhouse gases

Climate is on the agenda of both the EU (the energy and climate package) and at national level (the Clean and Efficient programme). No further attention is paid to climate in this Programme, except where solutions to the climate problem, for example biofuel use, themselves have a negative impact on ecosystems and biodiversity.

3.7 Land use and pressures on ecosystems

The land which is in use elsewhere in the world to provide for Dutch consumption is three times our national surface area. This requirement is expected to increase further. Some 45% of this is for food, the remaining 55% being mainly for timber and timber products. The figure for food is closely related to the demand for land-intensive meat and dairy products.⁵

3.8 Water use

Indirect use, i.e. water used in other countries to produce products consumed in the Netherlands, accounts for 89% of the water used by the Dutch. The impact of this water use is greatest in countries where water is scarce, e.g. China, India, Spain, etc.⁶

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/natres/pdf/fin_rep_natres.pdf
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ipp/pdf/eipro_report.pdf

⁵ *Sustainability Monitor for the Netherlands*, p. 61

⁶ <http://www.waterfootprint.org/?page=files/Netherlands>

4. National initiatives on natural resources

This chapter describes national policymaking processes aimed at promoting the sustainable use or discouraging unsustainable use of natural resources. Particular attention is paid to biotic resources, since their use places the greatest pressures on ecosystems and biodiversity.

4.1 Policy programme *Biodiversity Works!*

The Biodiversity Policy Programme 2008-2011, entitled 'Biodiversity Works, for Nature, for People, Forever', is an interministerial programme led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) in cooperation with the Ministries of Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment (VROM) and Foreign Affairs. The programme seeks to halt further loss of biodiversity and to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. It identifies five priority areas and three supporting themes and has set up a Biodiversity and Natural Resources Task Force representing different sectors of society.

The key priority areas are: trade chains and biodiversity; payment for biodiversity and ecosystem services; biodiversity works; ecological networks; and marine biodiversity and sustainable fisheries. The supporting themes are: new coalitions for biodiversity; knowledge for biodiversity; and communication for biodiversity. All these priorities underline the importance given by the Netherlands to implementing the EU Communication on natural resources, the EU Biodiversity Action Plan and international and bilateral treaties and partnerships.

4.1.1. Trade chains and biodiversity

The first priority area, trade chains and biodiversity, seeks to make trade in wood, soy, palm oil, fishmeal, biomass and peat more sustainable. These products were chosen because their trade has direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity, because of their importance in relation to the Dutch footprint and because Dutch companies play a major role downstream in the chain and can therefore be influential in this process. Briefly, the government intends to achieve the following results by 2011:

- agreements with business on the changes needed in the approach to biodiversity in at least the timber, palm oil, soya and peat trade chains;
- Dutch government procurement of only sustainably produced timber from 2010, and at least a 50% share of the Dutch market for sustainably produced timber by 2011;
- more sustainable production of biomass and biofuels at both national and international level;

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- more sustainable production of palm oil and soy (as both food and biomass);
- the integration of small non-EU producers into sustainable supply chains, covering at least soy, palm oil, timber and biomass;
- efforts in international forums to promote more sustainable trade chains for palm oil and soy.

Given the sizeable environmental footprint of these product chains, particularly in other countries, the Netherlands has launched the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), which will also work to increase social and economic sustainability (see 4.4 Sustainable Trade Initiative). Other initiatives that will impact the entire chain from producer to consumer include a round table on palm oil and soy and the introduction of quality marks, for example for timber. Within the Netherlands there are also several initiatives to boost corporate social responsibility and supply chain responsibility. Finally, government schemes to promote sustainable procurement will also help to make trade chains more sustainable (see 4.5 Sustainable procurement).

4.1.2. Marine biodiversity and sustainable fisheries

The priority area marine biodiversity and sustainable fisheries promotes the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in seas and oceans. Marine biodiversity is under increasing stress from overfishing, by-catch and disturbance of the seabed by fishing. Marine biodiversity also faces pollution, disturbance and climate change from a range of other human activities. The focus of national efforts in this area is on sustainable fisheries and the designation of protected areas. National policy has a strong European dimension, however, given that the North Sea is a single, inseparable ecosystem and the Common Fisheries Policy is a Community competence. The main activities to make Dutch fishing more sustainable are: reduction of by-catch and seabed disturbance; national regulations to grasp opportunities offered by the European Fisheries Fund; agreements with the sector on the implementation of the outlook for sustainable fisheries; and agreements with industry on measures to protect biodiversity in the fishmeal chain. International policy has broadly similar orientations: sustainable fisheries and the designation of protected areas; and more specifically, combating illegal, unreported and unregistered fishing and reform of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations.

4.1.3. Biodiversity and Natural Resources Task Force

The Biodiversity and Natural Resources Task Force has been asked to develop a vision on how the Netherlands can reduce its drain on natural resources. It will also suggest further

measures The Netherlands can take to conserve valuable ecosystems at home and abroad. Based on its medium/long-term vision the task force will make specific recommendations on how The Netherlands can use natural resources more sustainably in the short term.

For more information, see http://www.minlnv.nl/txmpub/files/?p_file_id=40923.

4.2 Policy Agenda Sustainable Food Systems

The Policy Agenda is an elaboration of part of the policy described in the policy document Sustainable Food sent jointly by the agriculture minister and the environment and health ministers to the House of Representatives in June 2009. It examines how the Netherlands can best contribute to making the global food system more sustainable, with a focus on the protein problem as a key challenge, and specifically the production and consumption of meat, eggs and dairy products. A growing world population with changing diets is putting steadily increasing demands on land, biodiversity, water and minerals. Greenhouse gas emissions are rising and fish stocks are being depleted. How can we continue to meet future human food needs sustainably within the constraints of our planet's ecosystem?

4.2.1. Overall goal

The long-term goal is to ensure that production and consumption of food help enhance global living standards and food security, while remaining within the carrying capacity of ecosystems: our planet must provide for all. This means a transformation in our food system. The programme focuses on the *Dutch* contribution to meeting this goal in accordance with the KADO theme 'Biodiversity, food and meat'.

4.2.2. Aims

The Agenda's aims are, within four years, to bring about innovations in the Dutch supply chain and a robust long-term shift towards sustainable protein consumption, with knock-on effects internationally. The programme should give momentum to the international agenda, leading to specific initiatives and long-term developments.

4.2.3. Implementation:

- A vision statement and strategy commanding wide acceptance will be prepared based on an in-depth analysis. This will determine the long-term agenda of central government and will be set out in a letter to the House of Representatives. The ongoing dialogue with the players in the food supply chain will play a major role.
- Dialogue with the public and consumers and other measures should induce them to waste less food and shift their consumption towards more sustainably produced

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animal and vegetable proteins. A number of activities have been initiated with the Netherlands Nutrition Centre and other bodies.

- Research is being conducted into various approaches to influencing behaviour.
- The programme is supporting technical and organisational innovations to increase the availability of sustainably produced protein-rich products in shops.
- Internationally, the emphasis will be on profile-raising and coalition-building, for example through collaboration with the FAO in organising a workshop on sustainable livestock farming. Contact has also been made with several other European countries that are working on this problem, and a first discussion recently took place at director level with other European countries.

For more information, see http://www.minInv.nl/txmpub/files/?P_file_id=40702

4.3 Sustainable Development: the government's approach

The government intends to promote a shift towards a sustainable society. A turnaround is needed to ensure that our prosperity is not achieved at the expense of the planet and of future generations, to strengthen social cohesion and to ensure that international development is fair and balanced. The government-wide approach to sustainable development (KADO) links and strengthens some of the current government programmes and initiatives in the field of sustainable development. The emphasis is on linking national and international efforts, harnessing innovation and entrepreneurship in the service of sustainable development, and promoting mutually beneficial interaction between public sector operations and policy.⁷ Initially KADO started with six policy themes: water and adaptation to climate change, sustainable energy, biofuels as an opportunity for development, carbon capture and storage, sustainable construction and sustainable food systems. In 2009 three further themes were added: biodiversity, globalisation and innovation.

These themes place the emphasis of the programme on natural resources. Another important element of the programme is putting central government's own operations on a sustainable footing. This includes sustainable procurement, energy conservation in government buildings, sustainable catering, sustainable management and facilities management. These efforts are reducing the drain on natural resources.

⁷ Parliamentary papers II, 2007-2008, 30 196, no. 32

This programme created the *Monitor Duurzaam Nederland* (Sustainability Monitor for the Netherlands) in 2009. The Monitor was set up at the request of the government by Statistics Netherlands and the three government policy analysis offices. The Monitor makes the concept of sustainable development concrete through the notion of the three forms of capital from which our well-being derives, showing what sustainability means for not only natural capital (natural resources), but also human, social and economic capital. The proposition is that the national stocks of these capitals must be preserved for future generations, and that we should also consider the demands the Netherlands places on capital beyond our borders, in accordance with the Brundtland Commission definition.

The Monitor gives a mixed picture of the situation. It shows that the Netherlands has high stocks of human, social and economic capital, although there are some qualifications in regard, for example, to work and the ageing population, knowledge and social cohesion. Our way of life does, however, have a major impact on global natural capital, particularly due to our CO₂ emissions, import of raw materials and energy, and declining biodiversity (both at home and abroad). This harms the sources of well-being of people in other countries. The Monitor shows that particularly the very poorest countries are rapidly depleting their natural resources, threatening the continued existence of future generations. These countries also often fail to invest sufficiently in other forms of capital needed for their longer-term welfare. There are plans for the publication of a new, improved Monitor in 2011.

Partly in response to the Monitor, the government in its progress bulletins on the KADO programme has shifted its emphasis, added the three new themes referred to above, and outlined a scenario of the future in which the sustainable use of natural resources plays a central part.⁸ On 17 May 2010 the government sent a new progress bulletin to the House of Representatives with a description of the programme's current status and a detailed account of the work being done to make central government operations more sustainable.

In this connection, the Social and Economic Council is currently preparing, at the government's request, an advisory report on sustainable development. A draft of this report was published on 6 April 2010.⁹ This report recommends that attention be given to the natural resources issue, urges the new government to develop a coherent strategy, and contains an offer on the part of the social partners to draw up an agreement on this subject.

⁸ Parliamentary Documents II 2008 – 2009, 30 196, no. 56

⁹ http://www.ser.nl/en/Publications/Publications/2010/2010_03.aspx

4.4 Sustainable Trade Initiative

The mission of the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), a public-private partnership established in 2008, is to accelerate and scale up the mainstreaming of sustainability into commodities markets. IDH seeks to make international trade in commodities such as cacao, tea, tropical timber, stone, soy, cotton and farmed fish sustainable. Investment plans are being developed for ten new sectors. The Minister for Development Cooperation launched the initiative and finances the IDH, but it is supported by the entire government, and other ministries including Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality, Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment and Economic Affairs are closely involved in IDH programmes.

Sector by sector the IDH unites social forces and brings frontrunners from business, trade unions, environmental organisations, development organisations and government together in coalitions. These coalitions carry out programmes that address the entire product cycle: from source (often in developing countries) through to end markets (often in the West). The idea is to transform the market by making sustainable production, trade and consumption the norm. The IDH also shares knowledge, supports cooperation and leverages investment by market parties by co-investing.

The IDH approaches sustainability from the standpoint of enlightened self-interest. With the world population growing rapidly, resulting in food, energy and natural resource scarcity, sustainable production and trade chains are in society's interest as they enable us to provide for our future needs. Developing countries are the main producers of the goods that will soon be scarce. Reducing negative social and environmental impacts there, while achieving sustainable consumption here, creates a win-win situation.

For more information see: www.duurzamehandel.com/en/home

4.5 Sustainable Procurement

Sustainable procurement is a central and local government programme managed by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. This has since 2006 been implementing the Koopmans/De Krom motion, which proposed that by 2010 sustainability should be a major criterion in all central government procurement and investment decisions. This objective was accepted by the government and reconfirmed in its programme of June 2007.

The environment minister has set sustainability criteria on behalf of central government and together with provincial and local government. These allow public agencies to incorporate

sustainability into their procurement policy and realise the objective. Fully sustainable procurement means that procurement complies with the requirements applying at the time for the relevant product groups. The award criteria allow more stringent environmental standards to be achieved.

The NL Agency analyses what the main environmental impacts are for each product group, and on this basis sets criteria for what can be regarded as sustainable. In drawing up these criteria, European procurement law provides a governing framework. One practical implication of this is that at least three suppliers of the product concerned must meet the standards set. The European rules also require transparency, verifiability and proportionality. The Cabinet has set environmental criteria for 45 product groups, which were published on 28 July 2009. On 9 October 2009 the Cabinet approved the international social criteria for sustainable procurement. The social criteria are based on respect for human rights and the four fundamental principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), such as protection against child labour and discrimination.

Sustainable Procurement seeks to stimulate the market for sustainable products by having government purchase sustainably. Sustainable Procurement and its criteria form a dynamic system, since the criteria are kept continuously updated. This ensures that they encourage rather than inhibit progress, since they incorporate the latest techniques and thinking. In addition to setting an example, this represents a stimulus of more than €50 billion, the amount government spends each year on goods, services and works. In 2010 central government intends to reach 100% sustainable procurement, municipalities will seek to achieve 75% and provinces and water boards at least 50%. By 2015 all public departments hope to achieve 100% sustainable procurement. While Sustainable Procurement is based on non-statutory policy instruments, the agreements entered into voluntarily by public bodies are of course binding. At the end of this year an issue of the Monitor will show whether the target percentages at different levels of government have been achieved.

An exercise to update the criteria for ten product groups was recently launched in close collaboration with industry. The modified criteria should be ready later this year. A study was also recently started into the criteria to be introduced in the next 3-5 years that suppliers can if desired anticipate.

A progress report on Sustainable Procurement will be submitted to the House of Representatives in the autumn.

For more information, see <http://international.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=46902>.

4.6 Sustainable timber

The government seeks to promote the sale and use of sustainably produced timber in the Netherlands. Timber is sustainably produced if it is produced in accordance with a number of environmental and social criteria. Policy on sustainable timber forms part of the Biodiversity Policy Programme. The policy elements that specially seek to promote the sale and use of sustainable timber in the Netherlands are the sustainable procurement of timber programme; the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) action plan; bilateral development projects encouraging sustainable forestry; and sustainable forestry projects under the Sustainable Trade Initiative (see section 4.4). The Dutch government is also financing several projects to promote sustainable timber on either the demand or the supply side.

4.6.1. Sustainable procurement of timber

The Dutch government decided in 2004 that it would prefer the timber it purchases to be sustainably produced. Failing this, purchased timber should always be at least legal. Policy on the sustainable procurement of timber is the responsibility of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. The ministry has drawn up criteria in consultation with stakeholders for the procurement of sustainable timber, which were adopted and approved by Parliament in June 2008. On 30 June 2005 the House of Representatives passed the Koopmans/De Krom motion urging the government to purchase only sustainable products by 2010. Municipalities undertook to achieve 75% and provinces 50% by 2010. The government has introduced the Timber Procurement Assessment System (TPAS) to decide whether timber was sustainably produced. The Dutch timber procurement criteria form part of the TPAS. The Timber Procurement Assessment Committee (TPAC) assesses whether timber meets the criteria. The TPAS is a metasystem: the Committee does not assess timber itself, but decides whether timber traded under a given certification system meets the Dutch criteria. Purchasers may also buy non-certified timber that has been sustainably produced, following another procedure whereby the supplier must demonstrate by means of 'category B evidence' that the timber meets the Dutch criteria.

The Dutch criteria fall under four headings:

1. Sustainable Forest Management (SFM): principles and criteria that ensure that the forest is managed in accordance with the 'triple bottom line': people, planet and profit.

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2. Chain-of-Custody and Logo Use (CoC): certified timber must be traceable along the entire supply chain and there must be clear rules for its administration and for product claims.
3. Development, Application and Management of certification systems (DAM): principles and criteria that ensure that certification systems are transparent, verifiable and operate soundly.
4. Procedure on Endorsement of certification systems by a Meta-system (PEM): criteria for meta-certification systems. These criteria are relevant to organisations without their own certification system, but test whether existing certification systems meet the criteria used by the organisation. An example is PEFC International.

The Dutch purchasing criteria for timber are the most ambitious in the EU. They reward trendsetters and encourage companies to follow them.

4.6.2. FLEGT action plan

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is responsible for Dutch policy on international sustainable forestry, one important aspect of which is tackling illegal timber. It is doing so by implementing Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), an EU initiative designed to combat illegal logging and trade in illegal timber.

The international debate on global deforestation is now focusing more than it used to on sustainable forestry. Sustainable forestry means essentially that forest products are harvested while maintaining high biodiversity. It has become clear in recent years that the transition to sustainable forestry is too great for many tropical countries to take all at once. There is therefore a major focus on legal forestry. The FLEGT action plan helps countries combat the ecological and social damage caused by unregulated and illegal logging. Help is given to the often poor producing countries to increase their revenues from the timber trade. Legal timber, though not necessarily sustainable, is at least the first step towards sustainability.

The European Commission is undertaking, on behalf of the Council, the negotiations on the Voluntary Partnership Agreements with timber producing countries. It is supported in these negotiations by various member states, including the Netherlands. These bilateral agreements are intended to support countries in their fight against deforestation. A licensing system provides assurance to the EU that timber imported from FLEGT countries has been harvested and traded according to the producing country's laws and taking account of social

and ecological concerns. Unlicensed timber from FLEGT countries is not admitted to the EU, giving producer countries an effective instrument against illegal trade. The action plan is intended to prevent illegal (and therefore often cheaper) timber from displacing more sustainably produced timber in the market. The EU is negotiating partnership agreements with Cameroon, Gabon, Indonesia, Malaysia and other countries. For more information, see <http://international.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=37479>.

4.6.3. Other initiatives

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which is also responsible for development cooperation) is supporting several bilateral initiatives on sustainable forestry.

The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment makes agreements with housing associations and construction companies and others to promote the use of sustainable timber. It also finances several activities, such as awareness campaigns for contractors, architects and the pallet industry on the importance of using sustainably produced timber.

An action plan will be supported by the Biodiversity Policy Programme this year to build awareness among decision-makers in the civil and hydraulic engineering sectors of the importance of using sustainable tropical timber.

Tropical timber is one of the chains addressed by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (see section 4.4).

4.7 Biofuels policy

Dutch government measures for biofuels are meant to take major steps towards sustainable energy for transport. At present 4% of petrol and diesel sold for road transport should consist of biofuels.

In recent years the Netherlands and the EU have taken measures prompted by concerns about the sustainability of biofuels, for example in relation to possible depletion of carbon stocks, biodiversity and peatlands, as well as food prices and social issues. In response to a Dutch initiative, for example, sustainability criteria for biofuels and other liquid biomass for energy applications have been included in the European Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) and the Fuel Quality Directive (2009/30/EC). Implementation of these directives is currently under way in the Netherlands. The Renewable Energy Directive requires that by 2020 at least 10% of the energy used for transport in the Netherlands is

renewable. The Fuel Quality Directive provides for the life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy to be reduced by at least 6% by 2020.

From 2011 companies must be able to demonstrate, on the basis of independent certification, that their biofuels meet the directive's sustainability criteria. Only sustainably produced biofuels count towards the objective of at least 10% by 2020. This involves not only biofuels but also renewable electricity and biogas.

The sustainability criteria for biofuels in this Renewable Energy Directive are:

- The biofuels must deliver a sufficient greenhouse gas saving over the entire life cycle.
- The fuels must not be produced on land with high biodiversity value.
- Land with high carbon stock must be protected.
- Production must not involve the drainage of peatlands.

A report on social sustainability is required.

A number of sustainability criteria need to be further elaborated: particularly important are the inclusion of the indirect impacts of growing crops for biofuels and the extension of the sustainability criteria to cover solid biomass. The government advocates measures to prevent the adverse consequences of this indirect land-use change, and believes that binding measures to minimise such change must be harmonised at EU level.

The Advisory Committee on the Sustainability of Biomass (CDB), chaired by former MEP Dorette Corbey, provides, on request or on its own initiative, advice to the government on the sustainability of the production and use of biomass and biofuels. The Committee has issued five advisory reports to date on the indirect impacts of biofuel production, reporting requirements for biofuels, the contribution of biomass to the sustainable energy objective and two reports on sustainability criteria for solid biomass.

The government plans a second call for tenders for the production of innovative biofuels in 2010. Subsidies of about €35 million will be provided. Companies will be invited to submit projects that meet the Brussels sustainability criteria and represent a step forward in the development of biofuels production.

The Netherlands also participates in international forums such as the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), which brings together government, international organisations and business worldwide to promote the sustainable use of bioenergy. The GBEP is developing a

voluntary system for assessing sustainability criteria and indicators for the national use of biofuels.

Agreements on sustainable biomass often cross national borders. Biomass is often cultivated in other countries. Our aim is to ensure the sustainability of the production of biomass for energy and other applications, both at home and abroad. In the Interministerial Programme for a Bio-based Economy as well, the Netherlands takes the position that the biomass must be produced sustainably. There is therefore an emphasis on close international cooperation in this field. The Netherlands is working with partners in developing countries on the sustainability and certification of biomass production and increased sustainability of production chains. Two grant schemes – one for sustainable biomass worldwide, with €12.5 million in grants for pilot projects, and one for sustainable biomass imports, with €7 million – have been set up. The pilot projects will all start during 2010.

The purpose of the Interministerial Programme for a Bio-based Economy is to accelerate innovation in bio-based systems, an area in which the Netherlands has a leading position and in which a strategic approach, both in the Netherlands and internationally, is crucial. The programme will take on a coordinating and orchestrating role for biomass across the entire value chain within government, the political responsibility remaining with the ministers concerned.

For more information, see <http://www.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=37483>.

4.8 Scarcity in a world in transition

This project considers comprehensive scenarios for the development of scarcity of food, water, energy and minerals in the context of climate change, declining biodiversity and shifting geopolitical relationships. It deals not only with the urgency of the interlocking scarcities and challenges which the world – and therefore Europe as well, and the Netherlands in particular – faces. It also suggests a new and broader range of potential actions to speed up the transition to a more sustainable use of natural resources.

There is a growing realisation of the importance for decision-making on sustainable development policy of taking account of the interrelationships between the various scarcities. The introduction of (first generation) biofuels made apparent the impacts that large-scale adoption can have on land use, food production and biodiversity. Problems faced in the longer term in moving towards sustainable food production include increasing scarcity of the irreplaceable mineral phosphate, rapid world population growth and the mounting shortage

of water and fertile land. The transition to renewable energy (solar, wind and water) can increase the drain on scarce metals. The extraction of fossil fuels and minerals requires energy and water. In making sustainable policy, a good understanding is needed of the interaction between these different scarcities to ensure that resolving one scarcity does not aggravate others.

Ultimately, policy must be built on technological innovation, more effective market interventions and new (sustainable) markets, the use of networks of people and companies to change consumer behaviour and lifestyles, global agreements (governance) and the forging of new alliances with states and networks. The study formulated specific questions in all these areas. The various strategic advisory councils and research institutes have taken these questions on board in their research and advisory activities for 2010. The results will be monitored under the KADO programme and reported in the progress bulletins regularly sent to the House.

The government fully expects to ask the Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR) to prepare a comprehensive advisory report during 2011/2012 on how the government can use the new insights and potential actions identified by the studies and recommendations in the 'Scarcity in a world in transition' programme.

For the report, see:

http://international.vrom.nl/Docs/internationaal/Scarcity_and_transition.pdf

4.9 International corporate social responsibility (CSR)

In 2008 the social partners represented in the Social and Economic Council (SER) drew up a statement on International Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In this statement the organised business community commits itself to international CSR, including responsible management of products through the entire life cycle. Life-cycle responsibility has recently become an increasingly important theme of CSR and the social partners in the SER have stressed that corporate responsibility extends along the supply chain. The SER statement sets out the principles applying. The SER set up a special committee in 2009 which meets twice per year. It will report annually on progress in implementing responsible life-cycle management.

The SER statement includes the guidelines and recommendations of the ILO, the OECD and the International Chamber of Commerce, which the SER regards as the normative framework for international CSR.

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises provide the most comprehensive statement of the environmental aspects of life-cycle management. For example: Enterprises should, within the framework of laws, regulations and administrative practices in the countries in which they operate, and in consideration of relevant international agreements, principles, objectives, and standards, take due account of the need to protect the environment, public health and safety, and generally to conduct their activities in a manner contributing to the wider goal of sustainable development. In particular, enterprises should:

- Assess, and address in decision-making, the foreseeable environmental, health, and safety-related impacts associated with the processes, goods and services of the enterprise over their full life cycle. Where these proposed activities may have significant environmental, health, or safety impacts, and where they are subject to a decision of a competent authority, prepare an appropriate environmental impact assessment;
- Continually seek to improve corporate environmental performance, by encouraging, where appropriate, such activities as:
 - a) adoption of technologies and operating procedures in all parts of the enterprise that reflect standards concerning environmental performance in the best performing part of the enterprise;
 - b) development and provision of products or services that have no undue environmental impacts; are safe in their intended use; are efficient in their consumption of energy and natural resources; can be reused, recycled, or disposed of safely;
 - c) promoting higher levels of awareness among customers of the environmental implications of using the products and services of the enterprise; and
 - d) research on ways of improving the environmental performance of the enterprise over the longer term.

4.9.1. Developments

The statement on International CSR of December 2009 set out principles and points of departure and announced that progress would be monitored annually. The method adopted by the Committee was elaborated in its first report:

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- Large enterprises report on their life-cycle management in accordance with Guideline 400 of the Dutch Accounting Standards Board, which was modified at the request of the SER to include the relevant provisions.
- The Committee will monitor supply chain policy using existing instruments such as the transparency benchmark. At the SER's request the latter will be extended from 170 to 500 enterprises. The transparency benchmark will also shortly be given more substance.
- SMEs will be encouraged to implement responsible life-cycle management through sectoral initiatives.
- The Committee also has a free hand to discuss individual cases of suspected contravention of the standards.

The social partners explain in the report how they intend to implement this commitment, referring not only to existing but also to new initiatives of the organised business community. The SER will engage in dialogue with all the trade associations about sustainable supply chains. MKB Nederland (the association of Dutch SMEs) will also collaborate with CSR Netherlands via the international sectoral programme.

4.10 From waste policy to life-cycle management

In recent decades waste policy, which focused mainly on the final stage of material life cycles, has yielded considerable environmental benefits.¹⁰ We are now gradually reaching the limit of what sectoral policy can achieve in reducing the environmental pressures of material chains.

The most effective way of moving towards the sustainable use of materials is to tackle the entire material chain. This is indeed how waste policy (as well as other sectoral policies) is developing. A life-cycle approach is being adopted (initially in waste policy) in order further to reduce the environmental impact of material chains. Opportunities for intervention are being sought earlier in the life cycle (e.g. during product design), thereby preventing environmental pressure from being transferred to later phases. Thinking in life-cycle terms also boosts innovation and engenders smarter cooperation between enterprises. A life-cycle approach allows waste policy decisions to be viewed in a wider perspective and ensures a comprehensive assessment of possible environmental improvements.

¹⁰ Material life cycle here means: all phases of the production life cycle, from the extraction of the raw material, through production and use to the phase in which it is discarded as waste, including recycling as a new raw material or product.

Seven priority waste streams have been chosen for Dutch policy, based on the extent of the environmental impact over the entire life cycle and the scope for environmental improvement. For each stream the partners along the material chain are collaborating voluntarily to make the entire chain sustainable. An indicative objective of a 20% reduction in environmental impact has been adopted. Possible approaches range from smart/different design, dematerialisation, more efficient raw materials use and waste prevention to closing material loops and higher-value recycling. In each case the most effective and efficient point of intervention is sought. The seven priority chains are: textiles, food waste, paper, PVC, aluminium, building and demolition waste and bulky household waste.

Lessons are being learned from the experiences with the priority streams about the conditions needed to make such an approach possible, attractive or even necessary. The intention is that ultimately the desired approach (to tackle environmental impacts at the best place in the chain) will be extended using generic policy instruments to the entire market. This cannot be achieved purely by sectoral policy; an integrated approach is needed. Present efforts are focused on preparing an integrated vision of the sustainable management of materials, consistent with international developments in this field.

4.11 *Initiatives from civil society*

Not only government but also many players in civil society and business and many individuals are active in promoting the sustainable use of natural resources in the Netherlands. These parties' initiatives are very diverse, with each concentrating in their own way on some aspect(s) of sustainability. Societal engagement of this kind is indispensable in shifting from the present unsustainable practices to a sustainable approach to natural resources.

The concept of sustainability is still the subject of heated debate. This touches not only on ethical issues, e.g. the necessity of ensuring animal welfare in producing food, but also on the multiplicity of factors involved in making a product or process sustainable.

We should not lose sight of the fact that it is not only producers who control whether natural resources are used sustainably. The manner and extent of use of products by consumers are also key determinants of whether natural resources are used sustainably.

Several existing societal initiatives are listed below to illustrate how different groups in society are mobilising to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

- The organisation Good Fishers intend to fish more intelligently, to catch only large adult fish, and to minimise damage to the seabed, the marine environment, birds and marine mammals. Good Fishers intends to develop short, transparent supply chains, so that the consumer can make a sustainable choice.
- On Texel the Saint Donatus Foundation has been experimenting for several years with the ecological harvesting of saltwater crops and small-scale curing techniques (drying and freeze-drying) so that crops such as marsh samphire, sea aster and sea kale can be prepared for use as a herb or taste enhancer in the kitchen.
- Ingrepro in Borculo produces algae for various purposes. The algae are a potential source of energy, and can be used as a fuel or as food.
- Kruidenier Food Services is reintroducing the Blaarkop, an old breed of cattle used for both milk and beef. The breed has a more robust health than the breeds now common, requires little supplementary fodder and can graze on relatively wet ground.
- Meatless is a 100% vegetable fibre that can be added to mince, snack products and sausage. It is intended to help reduce meat consumption.
- Various initiatives are underway to make the production of cotton more sustainable. Other initiatives are offering substitutes for cotton, for example clothes made from nettles, by the Brennells company.
- Bioconnect is a knowledge network for organic farmers in the Netherlands, which is helping to make Dutch agriculture more sustainable by means of research directed by farmers and by disseminating know-how.
- Various websites offer consumers access to a selection of sustainable firms and products.

4.12 International initiatives

4.12.1 Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)

SCP aims to decouple economic growth from environmental pressure. Living standards can continue to rise, but must be founded on the sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable energy and sustainable production and consumption patterns. This often means more efficient use of resources and energy. Emissions must everywhere remain within the carrying capacity of ecosystems. Emissions and other harmful environmental impacts must not be shunted off onto other parts of the world, other population groups or future generations. SCP implies a horizontal approach with the participation of all government tiers and social and economic partners in the various activities, and a mix of mutually reinforcing instruments.

4.12.2 Emergence of a global agenda

At the first Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992) SCP was seen as an overarching theme linking environment and development. Agenda 21 stated that we must break with unsustainable consumption and production patterns, particularly in the industrialised world, so that the global environment can be soundly managed and poverty reduced.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (signed at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002) contained a chapter on SCP. It called for a 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) to be developed to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production. The process of elaborating the 10YFP was started at Marrakech. The Marrakech process, as this is referred to, is a dynamic, multi-stakeholder forum for drafting the 10YFP, which should be a global action programme for SCP. Within the process, national and regional action programmes are also being drafted. The EU too has an SCP action programme, which contains a range of initiatives, forums and legislation such as the Retail Forum, the Eco-label Regulation, the Ecodesign Directive and the Communication on Green Public Procurement.

The Netherlands strongly supports the development and implementation of the European SCP Action plan. We intend to take a lead role in sustainable procurement, have always urged an ambitious approach to ecodesign and ecolabelling, and are very active in the committees for implementation of legislation. The Netherlands is one of the seven best performing countries for sustainable procurement and a leading voice for an ambitious EU sustainable procurement policy (including a social component, which has so far gained little attention in Europe), without detracting from member states' own roles and responsibilities.

As far as SCP in relation to the developing world is concerned, the Netherlands' approach is distinctive, focusing for example on bilateral cooperation with biofuel-producing countries like Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia. We also support initiatives for sustainable trade and sustainable biomass (palm oil, sugarcane and soya), and are very active in the UNEP International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management.

The progress made in implementing the SCP action programme will be discussed in 2010-11 at the meetings of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development. There will then be a summit in 2012 in Rio ('Rio+20') at which the 10YFP of Actions for SCP will be adopted. The Netherlands intends to showcase concrete SCP initiatives such as sustainable trade and sustainable procurement.

4.12.3 Sustainable Materials Management (SMM)

There is an increasing realisation in international forums such as the OECD that traditional policy instruments, such as those deployed in waste policy, are coming up against their limit, and that a full life-cycle approach is needed to make further progress. Since 2005 the Working Group on Waste Prevention and Recycling at the OECD has been exploring Sustainable Materials Management (SMM). SMM is an approach that promotes integrated activities for reducing adverse environmental impacts and conserving natural resources through the entire life cycle of materials, having regard to both economic efficiency and social equality. The OECD works mainly to provide a window into the experiences of non-EU countries, and provides opportunities to transfer knowledge from the EU to other countries in order to achieve a common understanding of challenges and the effective solutions that are often only possible with a concerted global policy. The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment aims to use SMM particularly to disseminate Dutch experience with life-cycle waste policy and to learn of best practices in other participating countries. It is also closely involved in preparations for a Global Forum on SMM in October 2010, organised jointly by the OECD and the Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) as part of the Belgian Presidency of the EU. The Presidency is also organising an informal Environment Council with a focus on what should be done at European level to integrate policies and instruments to support those most active in the material chain.

The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment has proposed in various European forums that a life-cycle approach be considered as part of SMM. In discussions with representatives of several European enterprises and organisations and with the European Commission, this has contributed to the development of an integrated life-cycle approach. The Ministry is examining which elements of the approach could be introduced onto the EU agenda. The intention is to interest other relevant actors in specific material chains. In undertaking projects in the cement and timber chains, the Ministry, working with partners from the relevant industries, has two objectives: to test the life-cycle approach at European level and to present a comprehensive life-cycle approach to the international community. Over the next six months the Ministry will monitor the extent to which other concrete life-cycle projects are launched in Europe. It is already clear that the Dutch findings are very similar to the European ones. The message that a life-cycle approach produces a better environmental outcome, and that it is therefore a valuable addition to the usual instruments used by policymakers and within enterprises, will however probably need frequent repetition at European level before it really becomes an established tool in research, innovation and practice.

5. Conclusion

There is a growing consciousness that the sustainable use of natural resources must be an important component of present and future policy on sustainable development. In its response to the PBL report *Growing within Limits* the government broadly endorsed the PBL's analyses and confirmed that a clear change in direction is needed, at both national and international level. Business as usual is not an option, as it would probably lead to falling living standards as limits are inevitably reached. The government subscribes to the notion of 'growing within limits', and is working hard to effect a transition to a bounded, sustainable economy and society in the Netherlands, in Europe and in the rest of the world. Extra funds for this have been allocated in the government's supplementary policy agreement 'Working on the Future'. Dutch efforts in the EU, UN, OECD, G20, development partnerships and international environmental agreements are in part directed towards creating the international conditions needed for a global change of direction.

In order to achieve sustainable management of natural resources, account needs to be taken of the interrelationships between climate change, loss of biodiversity and the food crisis. This requires a coherent approach and the coordination of different policies and initiatives, including those mentioned above.

The initiatives mentioned in the National Programme were undertaken over a period of time in response to advances in our understanding in different areas. Looking back on these initiatives, it can be seen that many of them were intended to bring about the more sustainable use of natural resources. It is however clear that a more coherent approach will be needed to fully achieve this goal. Several of the initiatives referred to, for example the Sustainable Food Systems programme and the initiative to prepare an integrated vision on Sustainable Materials Management, have a comprehensive approach as one of their goals.

A number of new initiatives have also been taken to strengthen policy on the sustainable use of natural resources. One of these is to develop criteria and indicators for all natural resources. In order to assess whether natural resources are being used sustainably, criteria and indicators are needed for the extraction, production and consumption of these resources. Criteria and indicators have already been or are currently being developed for several natural resources, e.g. timber and biofuels. This work can serve as a model for criteria and indicators for all natural resources.

The job of the Biodiversity and Natural Resources Task Force set up under the Biodiversity Works policy programme is to develop a vision of how the Netherlands can reduce its drain on natural resources. Based on this vision, the task force will make recommendations on making our use of natural resources more sustainable.

The European Commission is currently preparing for a review of the Thematic Strategy on Natural Resources, asking member states how they have implemented the present strategy. It is not yet clear what changes will be made to the strategy. This National Programme describes how the Netherlands is currently setting about promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and how it intends to further develop this policy. The key message is that efforts to make the use of natural resources sustainable need to focus most on biotic resources since these have the greatest environmental impact. It is important that these efforts take account of the interactions between the climate, biodiversity and food crises. The Netherlands calls on the European Commission to formulate a common European approach to achieving the sustainable use of natural resources.