

**Meeting between Commissioner V. SINKEVIČIUS and NL Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food quality C. SCHOUTEN**

When: 12 December 2021 at the margins of the Agrifish Council

This meeting was requested by Minister Schouten to discuss the possibility of a fast track procedure in order to renew the derogation allowing to spread livestock manure above the limit of 170 Kg Nitrogen/ha set by the Nitrates Directive. The Minister explained the transitory situation in the Netherlands. On the one hand the 7th Action Programme has been adopted by the care-taker government, opening the way for asking a derogation under the Nitrates Directive. On the other hand, the programme of the new Government would include a huge plan for agricultural transition by 2030, tackling nitrates pollution, biodiversity, water quality and climate change, and would allow to strengthen the Action Programme in line with the Commission's request. While the Minister would have liked to present the request for derogation in the Nitrates Committee this week, she realised that the in-between situation did not allow the Commission to put it on the agenda, but then expressed concern that the next derogation would be very much delayed in 2022 due to the different steps of the adoption procedure.

The Commissioner explained that the Commission is encouraged by the perspective of the new policy and is looking forward to it. However it cannot start the process for a derogation on the basis of a Government programme which is not yet finalised, but he assured the Minister that if the new measures show real ambition, he would support the Netherlands in the next steps.

The Minister suggested that as soon as the new Minister will have taken its function (early January), he/she takes contact with the Commissioner to present the new plans and clarify process on that basis.