

**Follow up by the Netherlands on the meeting of May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 on preparation for a derogation**  
**1 June 2022**

**General**

In the meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022 of European Commissioner for Environment Mr. Sinkevicius with Dutch Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality [REDACTED] the Commissioner stated to grant a transition derogation of the Nitrates Directive for the period 2022-2025 to the Netherlands. The aim of this derogation is to support the transition in Dutch agriculture towards sustainability and extensification as to fulfill environmental goals including water quality.

As we have informed you in previous meetings, the Dutch government has set an ambitious transition path for nature restoration, nitrogen reduction, climate change and improvement of water quality that will be realized in the coming 10 years.

The government acknowledges that strong measures are needed to realize this ambition. This entails both financial incentives and legal measures.

As announced by our government in the Addendum of the 7<sup>th</sup> Action Program of the Nitrates Directive, dairy farming will become completely land-based within 10 years (2032). Herewith the cycle of feed and manure will be further closed at a regional level and this will lead to an improvement of water quality and a large reduction in nitrogen fertilizer use.

In the period up to and including 2025, derogation of the Nitrates Directive is of great importance to maintain the area of grassland. For the most sensitive water quality areas, the Netherlands is prepared to waive a derogation for unprocessed animal manure after 2025. This is not yet the case for sandy-250, clay and peat soils, as water quality under these soils is at a much better level.

In addition to animal manure, nitrogen fertilizers are also used in the Netherlands. The Netherlands wants to strongly reduce the use of chemical fertilizers, partly in order to save energy and become more independent from fossil fuels. Making Renure possible is of great importance to make this turnaround. We therefore requested a country-specific solution in our letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 for these products.

We have considered the (additional) general conditions which we discussed on 23 May 2022 carefully and discussed them internally. We will go into depth with respect to them.

**Application rates**

*ENVI Proposal*

In line with the ambition of Netherlands to convert the dairy sector to a fully land based dairy sector, the maximum amount of livestock manure to be applied every year shall be reduced as follows

Year 2022: 250/230

Year 2023: 230/210

Year 2024: 210/190

Year 2025: 190/170

*Response*

In the implementation of the Nitrates Directive the Netherlands has made a distinction between soil types in order to do justice to the water quality issues. The different soil types are clay,- peat,- sandy,- and loessal soils.

In previous derogations a further distinction has been made between the level of the application standard for vulnerable sandy and loess soils, namely 230 kg/N/ha and the other soil types 250 kg/N/ha. So therefore, soils having the most difficulties to meet the water quality requirements have the lowest derogation application standard of 230 kg/N/ha.

Hereby we see a justification by making a further distinction in the height of the derogation application standards for the different soil types.

When granting a permit for derogation farmers can apply a higher application standard which is of benefit for them. However, derogation also comes with strict conditions. We have seen in the last years that the participation in derogation decreases. Also the amount of agricultural grounds and the amount of grounds under derogated farms decreases.

	Aanmeldingen	Verschil % huidig jaar t.o.v. voorgaand jaar	Landbouwgrond totaal ha	Grasland ha	Percentage grasland
2006	25.415	0,0%			
2015	19.812	2,3%	834.529	738.448	89%
2016	19.564	-1,3%	846.519	740.517	88%
2017	19.137	-2,2%	839.610	738.913	88%
2018	18.146	-5,5%	779.022	684.528	88%
2019	18.118	-1,4%	812.350	717.611	88%
2020	17.041	-4,9%	764.751	667.596	87%
2021	16.869	-1,0%	753.338	662.925	88%

*Table on requested and granted derogations 2021 (Draft report manure policy 2021, as shared May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022)*

In July 2019, an analysis by Wageningen Economic Research was carried out on an exploration of the decrease and the motivations of entrepreneurs to no longer participate in derogation.<sup>1</sup> This exploration was a result of the decrease in participation in derogation in 2016-2019. This exploration shows that the decrease is mainly caused by business termination, participation conditions that are considered restrictive and switching of companies to other products or production methods. The restrictive condition relates in particular to the 80% grassland requirement. There are regional differences with regard to the percentage decrease in area with derogation: this is stronger in Central and Southwestern sea clay, - Sandy-North and Sandy-South + Loess compared to the whole of the Netherlands.

We are of the opinion that is important to prevent that the reduction of derogation leads to undesirable effects, such as the conversion of grassland to arable land for crops whose cultivation leads to risks for achieving water quality objectives. In the elaboration of a fully land-based dairy and cattle farming we will set conditions the amount of grassland.

This also shows that at a certain point the conditions of derogation outweigh the benefit of participating in derogation for farmers and it is no longer of interest for them to participate in derogation. That is one of the main reasons why we propose a reduction path that takes into account this effect.

	<b>230 kg N/ha</b>	<b>250 kg N/ha</b>
<b>2022</b>	230	250
<b>2023</b>	220	240
<b>2024</b>	210	230
<b>2025</b>	200	220

As noted above, for the most sensitive water quality areas (the '230 regions'), the Netherlands is prepared to waive a derogation for unprocessed animal manure after 2025, which means the application rates will be further reduced to 170 kg N/ha as of 2026.

In our opinion this reduction path should include the country specific solution for the use of products derived from livestock manure as a substitute for the use of chemical fertilizers as we have requested and explained our reasoning in our letter of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

### **Manure (N&P) Production Ceiling**

#### *ENVI proposal*

- Decrease in 2020 & 2021: effect of buyout scheme under nitrogen law?
- Starting point 2021: N 473,7 P 149 (million kg)
- Expect at least similar linear decrease until 2025?
- 2022: N 458,0 P: 147,3
- 2023: N 442,3 P: 145,6
- 2024: N 426,6 P: 143,9
- 2025: N 410,9 P: 142,2

<sup>1</sup> WEcR, Afname derogatie: verkenning omvang en beweegredenen ondernemers, 2019

### *Response*

The current production-ceilings are related to the manure-production in 2002, and were taken up in the first derogation that was granted to the Netherlands and are laid down as of 2020 in our national Act on Manure following the derogation decisions 2018-2019 and 2020-2021.

Your starting point is the actual manure production in 2021. And we assume that these data were taken from the website of the Central Bureau of Statistics. The current status (23<sup>rd</sup> of May) of the 2021-figures are still preliminary figures. The data for 2021 will be final in mid-July. And the final data might change because of, among others, variation in nutrients in roughage feed that are analyzed and modelled, this is a normal procedure.

In our meeting of February, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 we have discussed the Structural Approach and the National Program for the Rural Area. As said then, our government seeks to unconditionally meet its international and European obligations with respect to nature, biodiversity, climate, soil and water by the means of an integrated, area-focused approach. In 2020, the structural approach to nitrogen was introduced. The approach includes legally binding reduction targets that are enshrined in the 'Nitrogen Reduction and Nature Improvement law'. The former government allocated 6 billion euros to measures that aim to meet these targets. These measures are currently implemented. This approach is in addition to measures that were already in place to improve the quality of nature in close cooperation with the provinces.

Additional to this structural approach, this government will implement an ambitious area-specific policy program: the National Program for Rural Areas. Through this program we are developing integrated strategies and measures aimed at nature restoration, climate and water that address the specific needs and challenges of each area. This ambitious program aimed at the transformation of our rural areas is supported by a fund of 25 billion euros.

We have also informed you that the Government will accelerate the transition towards sustainable agriculture through extensification, conversion, innovation, legalization and relocation.

The Dutch government is fully committed to unconditionally meet its international and European obligations with regard to nature, biodiversity, climate, soil and water by the means of an integrated, area-focused approach. And it will do so by putting in place an inevitable system. Inevitability means that clear frameworks are set to achieve the goals, ensuring that the results will be unequivocally achieved. It must be ensured that the effect occurs, in what time frame and at what location. The system is set up in such a way that the objectives, including the required nitrogen reduction, are guaranteed to be achieved through the correct use of instruments and measures.

Water quality is an integral part of the National Program for the Rural Area and budget will be available, as well as binding goals per area, to tackle the issues related to the Nitrates Directive and the Water Framework Directive in order to fulfil the objectives of both Directives. For water quality the goals are already defined per area (WFD and ND). It will be examined per area which measures are needed to achieve the objectives. And this will be laid down in binding result obligations per area.

In the addendum the measures of the NPLG which will improve water quality are described:

- a. Extensification of Dutch agriculture
  - a. Extensification of farms & transition to more sustainable farm types -> reduction of manure pressure
  - b. Buyout of farms (last instance) and downgrading prices of arable parcels
  - c. Transition to solely land based dairy farms
- b. Wide stream valleys
- c. Other additional area specific surface (and groundwater) water measures

Because the National Program for the Rural Area will be executed by an integral, area specific approach, it is of utmost importance that all the concerned parties in those areas are and stay committed. An gradual annual reduction of the national manure production ceiling will put extra pressure on the integrated area approach. In this approach buyout and termination of farms is enclosed and this will result in taking out and annulling production rights out of the market. This means a direct and permanent reduction of livestock and thus of manure production. In order to ensure the reduction of phosphate and nitrogen production by livestock is definitive and permanent, the manure production ceilings, which are laid down in the Fertilizer Act, will be adjusted downwards to confirm the decrease in the volume of the livestock. We are however of the opinion that this should take place in line with the natural attrition and farmers ending their

businesses. Another point is that the measures, including the buyout and termination of farms, will have the first effects mid-2024. So therefore the first results will not be there to see in the first years.

Our conclusion is that the pace of downward adjustment of the manure production ceiling should follow the pace of the expected effects of the area process. We therefore suggest to update the national manure production ceiling to the level of 2020 as definitive data for 2021 are not yet available. For 2020 that means a ceiling for N of 489,4 and for P this is 150,7. Nationally we can adjust our legislation per 1 January 2024 since it is embedded in our Fertilizer Act.

### **Derogation in Natura 2000 sites: What is the situation with agriculture activity and derogations in/close to areas under the birds and habitats directive?**

#### *ENVI proposal*

Ensure that derogation does not jeopardise the objectives of Law to reduce ammonia emissions and water quality in Natura 2000 sites.

#### *Response*

In the Dutch situation, the majority of agricultural parcels located within these areas are designated as natural terrain. This comes with additional restrictions in the manure application standards, whereby the upper limit is already set at 170 kg N/ha from animal manure. Lower norms can be set by management contracts for these terrains. Applying manure to these grounds is legally seen as transport to outside of the farm and therefore has to be accounted for through a transport document.

We agree with your proposal to exclude the parcels in nitrogen sensitive and overloaded Natura 2000 sites from derogation.

### **Groundwater protection areas**

#### *ENVI proposal*

No derogations in groundwater protection areas. Additional measures to reduce fertilisation and accelerate the conversion to sustainable agriculture in groundwater protection areas.

#### *Response*

With the 6<sup>th</sup> Action Program a management agreement has been agreed upon by the Ministries of Infrastructure & Water management and Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality together with the concerned provinces, [REDACTED] and LTO, for the ground water protection areas in order to realize the goals of the Nitrates Directive in 2025 in these sensitive zones. Last year an evaluation has been done on the weighting of the target by the regional parties and on the process of the agreement-itself.<sup>23</sup>

The target evaluation shows that the target of 50 mg/l nitrate is expected to be achieved in 50% of the areas with the approach advocated in the management agreement, whereby agricultural entrepreneurs reduce the leaching of nitrate through better management.

The evaluation of the process of the agreement-itself is that the approach is seen as added value and that a lot of valuable knowledge and experience has been gained. There is also satisfaction about building on the projects that were already underway in the five provinces, in which the most important stakeholders were already sitting around the table and working on the basis of a common goal and shared urgency to reduce nitrate concentrations. An essential part of the approach was advising individual or groups of farmers, which led to increased awareness and knowledge and support for the implementation of measures aimed at reducing nitrate concentrations in groundwater. As a result, these measures were converted into action more and more effectively. The parties involved find the trust built up and the cooperation important.

Since a lot has been established in the last years resulting from this management agreement and mandatory measures will have their effect after 2025 we suggest the following. As of 2026 it will not be able to grant a derogation in parcels in groundwater protection areas.

In the period until 2026 fitting measures will be taken in order to reach the goals in these areas. To achieve these goals there will be made an connection with the National Program on Rural Areas and the inevitable legal set of instruments.

### **Buffer strips**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-1008884.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-1008885.pdf>

### *ENVI proposal*

Apply the CAP legal requirement of 3m everywhere as a minimum (with minimum exceptions) (or more as proposed in 7th NAP + addendum)

### *Response*

The size of the buffer strips as proposed in the seventh Action Program, and as previously discussed with you, are set at 2 meters-buffer strip because of several reasons. Research shows that there are unique characteristics to the Dutch landscape that make buffer strips much less effective and applicable as compared to other international research.<sup>4</sup> These characteristics include the abundance of drainage of parcels, flat lands and deep soils with high infiltration rates. Next to this, model studies show that effectivity does not increase linearly with larger strips. Therefore, the Netherlands, in general, does not view applying larger buffer strips everywhere as a proportional measure. Especially given the small parcel sizes and abundance of ditches in the north western parts. This view extends to a CAP legal requirement of 3 meters. We therefore plead to keep both the 7<sup>th</sup> NAP and CAP basic requirements at 2 meters.

Of course, buffer strips will be larger when water courses require every possible improvement. Such as the 5 meter requirement for ecologically vulnerable streams, and the much larger buffer zones in stream valleys in the sandy-soils in Central, East and the South of the Netherlands as described in the addendum (100-250 meters).

### **Overall and gradual reduction of fertilization rate (manure + chemical) as a measure to address the increasing nutrients pollution**

As announced in the 7<sup>th</sup> Action Program an update will take place on the nitrogen applications standards and the modelling. Scientific advice will form the basis of decision-making as is customary when changes in usage standards and the system are made. The Scientific Committee on Nutrient Management Policy has been asked for scientific advice on the update.

### **Enhanced enforcement strategy: are all conditions set in previous derogations in place, in all regions? Are all regions implementing the strategy? How do you plan to go forward**

On 18 May 2022 we send you the draft report on the Dutch Manure Policy 2021 which provides insight in several subjects in our policy including the progress on the execution and enforcement, and on the Enhanced enforcement strategy.

The implementation of the Enhanced Manure Enforcement strategy in 2022 is going well. With regard to the area-oriented approach, risk-analysis, planning and execution of inspections by RVO and NVWA with the Water Boards and Environmental Services, and when possible with Public Prosecution Service and National Police, are jointly being carried out. Moreover, there is attention for communication and knowledge transfer in this cooperation in the framework of the area-oriented approach. The implementation of the introduction of real-time reporting of manure transport (rVDM) is in full swing. In 2021 the executive order (Uitvoeringsbesluit Meststoffenwet) has therefore been amended (Stb. 2021, 192). A further small second amendment has been submitted for advice at the Council of State (Raad van State) and may be completed before July 2022. Moreover, in 2021 the standstill period of the notification of the implementation regulation (Uitvoeringsregeling Meststoffenwet) has finished. While further amendments have proven necessary regarding technical instructions a new amendment will be notified at short notice. Test runs which had started mid 2021 with a limited number of transporters, suppliers and users of manure have been completed. The 1st of June 2022, in anticipation of the entry into force of the new regulations on 1 January 2023 a representative pilot started, in which participating transporters, suppliers and users of manure will report their transports through the rVDM-system.

### **Fertilizer Register – 7<sup>th</sup> NAP: when will it be in place, what will it be?**

### **Fertilization plan and account: how will it relate with fertilizer register> Why only for derogated farms?**

#### **Fertilizer administration**

All farmers in the Netherlands are obliged to keep an administration of the use of fertilizers on their fields. In our national regulation, Chapter 5 Uitvoeringsregeling Meststoffenwet sets clear rules what this administration must comply with. The administration takes into account, solid manure, slurry, sewage sludge (hardly used in the Netherlands), compost and other fertilizers (e.g. chemical fertilizers). In the Netherlands, the farmer makes this administration available for inspection-officials.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-995837.pdf>

### **Fertilizer plan**

Derogation farms have to make a fertilizer plan before the growing season. This plan is an obligation in the derogation decision for all farmers that make use of the derogation. This provision is part of all derogation decisions which were granted to the Netherlands since 2005. Farmers must be able to consult a fertilizer plan for enforcement purposes.

The intention of this rule is to make farmers more aware of the use of animal manure and the additional use of artificial fertilizers and other fertilizers, in order to adjust fertilization as best as possible and at the right time to the crop demands. In other words: ensuring good agricultural practice.

Complying with application standards: it is important that farmers realize in advance what the application standards mean for the fertilization on their farm and for the supply and removal of animal manure. In other words: ensure in advance that your plans fit within the application-standards.

It is our impression that almost all farmers make such a fertilizer plan for their farm anyhow, whether they make use of the derogation or not. Fertilizer plans are very common at all farms in the Netherlands.

### **Intensive farms**

Livestock farms that produce more than 170 kg N per hectare livestock manure are obliged to deliver additional information to the public services in the Netherlands. Our national regulation, Article 35 Uitvoeringsbesluit Meststoffen, obliges farmers to do so. These farms need to send in data on the supply of fertilizers (livestock manure, chemical fertilizers, compost en sewage sludge), on their fertilizer storage, the number of animals, and on the disposal of fertilizers. In relation to the application standards this data are used by control and enforcement authorities. These data are looking back on the last growing season and need to be delivered before 1<sup>st</sup> of February the year after. This are derogation farms, but also pig, poultry and veal farms (no derogation farms).

### **Fertilizer register / insight in chemical fertilizers**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> Nitrates Action program (paragraph 6.3.4) the Netherlands proposes to get a better insight in the trade and use of chemical fertilizers, also in the crop-production. Arable farms are currently not seen as an intensive farm, these companies are not obliged to deliver additional information to public services. The plan proposed in the 7<sup>th</sup> NAP is to start with an action plan, that will be drawn up in 2022 in collaboration with the supplying industry and the primary sector to gain better insight into the use of all fertilizers (both livestock manure and chemical fertilizers) in the Netherlands. In addition to use at national and regional level, it is important to gain more insight into the use of fertilizer types (e.g. urea, CAN, Ammonium-sulphate) at individual farm level. The aim is to connect to existing systems. These fertilizer data can be used to improve fertilization recommendations that encourage farmers to increase nutrient use efficiency. This utilization efficiency is a measure of the proportion of nitrogen used that is converted to harvested product during a growing season and is thus an indicator of how a farmer applies precision farming principles in his fertilization strategy. In addition, these fertilizer data help improve the effects of fertilization on emissions to soil, water and air to provide insight into models (e.g. NEMA) and might be used to monitor how much synthetic fertilizers are replaced by fertilizers from recycled sources. Finally it could also be used to indicate possible over-fertilization with fertilizers by farmers, and an instrument for control and inspection services to carry out a physical company visit and to check the administration.

In 2022 an action plan will be delivered, this will lead to implementation in 2023. A fertilizer register could be there from 2024 onwards. We are strongly looking to the Flemish system. In relation to the above mentioned systems of control the fertilizer register will give additional information on none-derogation farms, especially crop farmers. We would like also to make better use of the information that could be delivered by the fertilizer sector. Since this measure is already taken up the action program and poses extra measures to farms that not make use of the derogation the Netherlands suggest that this measure is not taken up in the derogation decision.

### **Ploughing conditions, catch crops, manure application calendar: How much is covered by the 7<sup>th</sup> NAP and applicable to all farmers?**

The closed periods for application of manure are specified by type of manure and soil type and therefore cover all parts of the open-field agricultural sector (see Annex 3 of the 7<sup>th</sup> NAP). The 7<sup>th</sup> NAP tightens the closed period for slurry and liquid sewage sludge from the 15<sup>th</sup> of February to the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, with the exception of crops that receive manure earlier. The closed period was already moved to the 15<sup>th</sup> of March for maize on sandy and loessal soils in the 6<sup>th</sup> NAP.

Following the 6<sup>th</sup> NAP, it is obligatory since 2019 to sow a catch crop before the 1<sup>st</sup> of October when growing maize on sandy and loessal soils.

The 7<sup>th</sup> NAP goes a step further and obliges as of 2023 either the sowing of catch crops before the 1<sup>st</sup> of October after *any* crop on sandy and loessal soils, or a decrease in the nitrogen application norm in the next year comparable to the potential N-uptake of a catch crop (see section 5.5.3 of the 7<sup>th</sup> NAP). This last option is provided as harvest periods vary per crop and year. The catch crop obligation is limited to sand and loess, as empirical data for their application on clay and peat soils is very limited and preliminary calculations show that their effect would be very small.

### **Soil analysis and measures to improve soil structures: for all farmers?**

Derogated farms need to analyse their soil at least every four years by a periodic nitrogen and phosphorus analysis of the soil. This analyses is performed for every part of the farm that is homogeneous in terms of crop rotation and soil characteristics. At least one analysis is required per five hectares of land.

If a non-derogated farmer wants to apply more phosphate from both animal manure or fertilizer than the strictest norm, a soil analysis has to be performed. Therefore many farms, including arable farms, still take soil samples to determine the phosphate content of their soils. A rough estimate is that at least 40-50% of farmers make use of this option. If a soil is not analysed, automatically the lowest application standards do apply.

Many farmers combine this sampling with an analysis of other soil parameters such as organic matter, soil biodiversity and structure. The largest laboratory in the Netherlands offers these services for just a few euros extra per hectare, which generally can be cost-neutral because of increasing yields through better management.

Improving soil structure is a complex issue with many possible approaches. We believe there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Therefore, the Netherlands chooses a combination of several methods. The first method is obligatory rotation with resting crops as established in the seventh action program, combined with financial stimulation of increased rotation with resting crops through the CAP eco-schemes. Next to this, through the Task Force Agricultural Water Management (in Dutch: Deltaplan Agrarisch Waterbeheer) farmers are guided in improving soil management tailored to their situation. Lastly, there are several research projects, such as Slim Landgebruik (*Clever Land Use*) developing applicable knowledge for farmers to increase carbon storage in their soil.

### **Conditions to reduce ammonia emissions? General conditions of reduction in line with Nitrogen law?**

#### *Ammonia emissions from application techniques on grassland*

In recent years, using the application techniques of slurry with the lowest possible ammonia emission for each soil and crop type has become mandatory. At this moment, no scalable techniques are available on grass- or arable land that have lower ammonia emissions, without serious side effects on soil quality and yields.

Deep injection and acidification of manure are techniques with lower ammonia emissions on grassland, compared to the legally prescribed methods. However, these techniques result in either significant damage to the grass sod and soil structure, or excessive application of sulfuric compounds.

Dilution of manure (slurry) with water in a ratio of 2:1 has been proven to be effective on clay and peat soils when used in conjunction with application of slurry on the soil (the so-called "sleepvoetbemester"), and is therefore legally prescribed as an alternative to shallow injection on these soil types. Dilution of slurry is currently being researched for application on sand- and loess soils, where only shallow injection is allowed, but preliminary results show no significant reduction of ammonia emissions compared to control.

Therefore Wageningen Research, commissioned by the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, is currently rolling out an innovation program in cooperation with NGO's, sector organizations and other research institutes collecting and prototyping new techniques. The goal of the program is reducing ammonia emissions from manure application by 50%, making a significant contribution to the goals laid down in the Nitrogen Law. The program will run until 2024. Definitive results are not expected before that period.

Improper use of the legally prescribed techniques can also diminish the effectiveness of these techniques. Therefore, enforcing authorities already perform inspections in the field where the correct performance of the technique is checked. Next to this, the program described above is currently organizing demonstration days where contractors and farmers are being shown the importance of proper application with real-time measurements of ammonia emissions.

The Nitrogen Reduction and Nature Improvement Act (Wet stikstofreductie en natuurverbetering) formalises our commitment to improving the natural environment and reducing nitrogen deposition. This Act is being implemented through the Nitrogen Reduction and Nature Improvement Programme, which is also responsible for implementing the measures, monitoring in the interim and adjusting these actions as needed. Achieving our nature-related goals will require a major reduction in the nitrogen deposition in nitrogen-sensitive nature areas. To that end, nitrogen reduction targets have been established. These are known as the environmental standards, in connection with which the Dutch government has an obligation to achieve results. The Act sets out a number of environmental standards. For instance: nitrogen deposition on at least 40 per cent of the surface area of the nitrogen-sensitive nature areas within the Natura 2000 network must be reduced to less than the critical deposition load by 2025. This applies for 50 per cent of the areas by 2030 and 74 per cent by 2035. The critical deposition load is the threshold above which the quantity of nitrogen deposition poses a risk to the quality of the nature area in question. The coalition agreement of the newly formed Dutch government (the fourth Rutte cabinet) includes an agreement to shorten the deadline for achieving this objective: nitrogen deposition in at least 74 per cent (rather than 50 per cent) of the nitrogen-sensitive nature areas within the Natura 2000 network must be less than the critical deposition load by 2030. To meet this target and achieve the objectives in connection with nature, water quality, soil and climate, the new government has earmarked a further 25 billion euros in addition to the existing budget resources for nitrogen and nature-related measures established by the previous government (7 billion euros).