To the attention of the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen
BRUSSELS

Nr.: 3798877 The Hague, 15 February 2024

Dear President Von der Leyen,

Rapid and fundamental change is a characteristic of the transition towards a more ecologically, economically and socially sustainable agricultural sector. A transition that remains as urgent as ever. Farmers across Europe have constructively embarked on this transition, while ensuring food security. However, many farmers also face small margins and high administrative burdens, resulting in concerns about their livelihood and a decreasing support for the green transition. They deserve our full support.

In that light, many member states have called on the Commission to facilitate this necessary transition. A key element, in our view, is the evaluation of the Nitrates Directive to allow new farming techniques. In this light I wish to specifically draw your attention to RENURE.

Biobased fertilizers, such as RENURE, prevent leaching of nitrogen to the environment and are an alternative to synthetic fertilizers. Reduced dependency on costly synthetic fertilizers by substituting these by biobased fertilizers would also be a way to cut costs for farmers. This would be a clear win-win for farmers, climate and the environment, as also recognised in the Commission’s recent communication on the EU’s 2040 climate target. Moreover, shifting from synthetic to biobased fertilizers would strengthen the open strategic autonomy of the EU agricultural sector and make farmers less vulnerable to price shocks resulting from geopolitical instability. We firmly believe that RENURE presents a genuine, practical solution to support the green transition and farmers in the short term. This was underlined by the wide support for RENURE in the various discussions of the AGRIFISH Council, most recently in January 2024, as well as by several Resolutions of the European Parliament in this respect.
Currently, however, using biobased fertilizers such as RENURE is not possible above the threshold established for animal manure for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones due to the strict definition of animal manure on the one hand and synthetic fertilizers on the other in the current Nitrates Directive. We therefore welcome the Commission’s plan to evaluate the Nitrates Directive with a view to allowing the possible use of products that stimulate circular use of resources. Understandably, this requires careful consideration, something which has our full support. But we should not lose time and therefore urge you to allow possible interim arrangements to enable agricultural nutrient recycling by allowing the use of RENURE products as synthetic fertilizers, in anticipation of the evaluation of the Nitrates Directive.

The agricultural sector is an essential part of the European economy and European way of life, including for ensuring our food security. Let’s continue our close cooperation towards an environmentally sustainable sector in which farmers can continue to earn a good living.

Taking this opportunity, I would be delighted to invite you to the Netherlands to discuss the challenges of the agricultural sector.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Rutte  
Prime Minister of the Netherlands