

PRESS RELEASE

Sustainable development major challenge for Dutch agriculture

20 March 2013 – The future of agriculture in the Netherlands is under intense debate, that tends to get stuck. This debate needs a fundamental shift, in order to accelerate sustainable development within the entire field of agriculture and horticulture. This is the only way to ensure a valued and vital Dutch agricultural sector in twenty years' time. These are some of the conclusions formulated by the Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Raad voor de leefomgeving en infrastructuur, Rli) in its advisory report 'Room for Sustainable Agriculture', presented today to Sharon Dijksma, the Dutch Minister for Agriculture.

Agriculture under pressure

In the report the Council addresses the major concerns that exist concerning developments in agriculture and horticulture, as well as the national and international significance of the sector. Concerns about public health and animal welfare, deteriorating landscape and environmental pollution are all putting pressure on agriculture. At the same time, its contribution to the agri-food chain, entrepreneurship, trade, logistics, innovation, and the Dutch landscape means the sector is of national and international importance.

Accelerated continuing sustainable development

If the Dutch agricultural sector wants to still be valued and vital in twenty years' time, it will have to undergo accelerated and far-reaching sustainable development. In its report, the Council distinguishes three business models: land-tied agriculture, building-tied agriculture, and agriculture with an urban orientation. Each model faces its own sustainability challenges: economic, social and/or ecological. The debate on which agricultural model is the most sustainable has a paralysing effect, and will not result in continuing sustainable development for the whole sector, development which is both desirable and feasible.

Societal interest as guiding principle

The Council calls on government authorities, industry and NGOs to remove barriers to an accelerated process sustainable development of agriculture and horticulture. This requires creating an implementation strategy for the development of agriculture in the Netherlands, with societal interest as the strategy's guiding principle. The application of knowledge and innovation must be expanded and new alliances formed. Government(s) at all levels must create space for the different business models, provided they satisfy the applicable sustainability requirements. Laws and regulations that hinder the continuing sustainable development of the sector must be eliminated. The government must ensure a permanent dialogue between society and the sector, a dialogue that will result in greater mutual understanding and respect.

Note for the editors

The press release, the advisory report 'Room for Sustainable Agriculture', and a short film setting out the main points of the report, is available on www.rli.nl. For more information on the report, please contact Agneta Andersson, Project Manager, agneta.andersson@rli.nl, +31 6 20 61 49 18; or Miep Eisner, Communication Officer, miep.eisner@rli.nl, +31 6 15 36 93 39.

About the Council



The Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (*Raad voor de leefomgeving en infrastructuur*, Rli) is an independent advisory body to the Dutch government and parliament. The Council offers solicited and unsolicited advice on policy affecting the sustainable development of the human environment and infrastructure. In particular, the Council addresses strategic social issues relating to spatial planning and the economy, housing, the environment, food and raw materials, nature, agriculture, mobility and safety.

