



Council for the Rural Area

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Work Programme 2006 - 2007

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Assigned to the Council for the Rural Area, one of the permanent advisory councils of the government and the Parliament, is a work programme to be adopted by the Cabinet every year on the basis of a proposal drawn up by the Council in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Safety. The Council has formulated a work programme for two years, 2006 and 2007 to indicate what issues the Council will be dealing with in these two years. This work programme is motivated by the fact that, both as to its staff and its intentions, the Council has made a new start as of early 2006. This is the reason why the Council includes 'strategic listing' for the first time, which is aimed at nourishing the Council's yearly programming and influencing the agendas of other parties. The Council intends to seek more after the sharpness of the dialogue on the rural area. Another new element is the room given to Provinces for asking advice from the Council. This is related to the shifted responsibilities as a result of the implementation of the Organisation of the Rural Area Act. The work programme is a dynamic programme of advice subjects. New applications for interim advice, impulses from the working party for 'Strategic Listing', discussion meetings, working party meetings and working visits will influence the prioritisation and the scope of the recommendations. The work programme has listed the following advice subjects:

1. The Zuyder Sea Line, Central - northern Netherlands rail connection
2. Advisory letter 'Entitled to Green'
3. From 'taking care of' to 'taking care that'
4. The Netherlands and the European Policy for the Rural Area
5. Food Quality
6. Holland's Southern Wing
7. The world on paper versus practice - the tragedy of good intentions
8. The role of the province in the rural area, and area-oriented practice
9. National Agricultural Infrastructure
10. Strategic agenda
11. Youth
12. Bio-based economy
13. Revision of the tentative World Heritage List

1. The Zuyder Sea Line – Central - northern Netherlands rail connection

In February 2006, the Ministers of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the State Secretary of Economic Affairs invited the Council for the Rural Area, the Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management and the Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment to draw up a joint advice about the structural concept of the railway across the reclaimed Zuyder Sea. The preference for a joint advice was prompted by the wish to guarantee completeness in the decision-making process. Aspects of spatial planning, traffic and transport, nature and landscape, and economy are considered to be interconnected.

After a short but probing advice programme, the three councils advised the government to abandon the plans for the construction of a fast public transport connection, in this case the Zuyder Sea Line, between Amsterdam and Groningen.

Also on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis they agreed that a new and fast railway connection between Amsterdam and Groningen in the north of the country would insufficiently contribute to the improvement of the economic situation of the northern provinces.

However, the Councils are of the opinion that public investments in high-quality public transport of the Northern Wing in connection with the investments in red, green and blue quality (quality in urban, rural and water development) are justified. Furthermore, the Councils advised the government to invest in a combination of elements from the transition package and the regional accessibility solutions for the northern regions of the Netherlands.

On 7 April 2006, the three Councils presented the joint advice 'Structural Concept for the Zuyder Sea Line to the Ministers of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the State Secretary of Economic Affairs.

2. Advisory letter 'Entitled to Green'

In its advice 'Entitled to Green' (June 2005), the Council for the Rural Area expressed its concern about the quality of nature in public areas. The Council submits in its advice that the quality of nature is vital to the quality of life, and to health, economy and biodiversity. So far, these functions of nature have been insufficiently recognised. By taking care of nature, the targets of several policy domains can be achieved simultaneously, and will result in less public spending. For that reason, the Council advised the government departments, provinces, municipalities, project developers, citizens and entrepreneurs to adopt a critical attitude towards their own working methods. The problems that were identified during the realisation of green quality were put forward during the discussions that the Council had with the parties involved after giving advice on this subject. The Council included the observations of these discussions to the Ministers of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, and of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment in its letter of June 2006.

One of the major recommendations of this advice was that there must be an improvement in coordination between the ministries involved (including the Ministries of the Interior and Economic Affairs) and even with the lower authorities, such as the provinces, de regions and the municipalities. It is important to have more knowledge about public costs and benefits of green and nature. Not only must the larger municipalities be observed when the policy is implemented but smaller municipalities must also have the availability of resources.

3. From 'taking care of' to 'taking care that'

The government has to deal with a number of developments that make governing difficult, such as the increasingly complex societal problems and the current high hopes that the government will take care of them. This also resulted in a search for the way in which the present social contract can be given shape. With "From 'taking care of' to 'taking care that'", the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality wants to shift responsibility onto the community. In the Ministry's policy programme "Vital, and together", the paper "From 'taking care of' to 'taking care that'" is described as the aim of a government "*that makes it possible that societal parties can take their own responsibility for organising their lives and their environment*". This change is presently mainly taking place in the sphere of agricultural production and food quality. The Minister asked the Council for the Rural Area in what way the administrative change in the scope of nature and rural policy could be given shape.

In its advice, the Council first observes how the Ministry is now implementing the change. Further investigation goes into the question how to determine whether responsibilities can be shared with private parties, and if so, what the risks and the ensuing dilemmas are with which the government and the private parties will have to deal with. For the sake of discussion, the Council outlines the unutilised possibilities for "From taking care of to taking care that" in the policy domains of nature and rural areas, and the consequences they have for the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

The Council wants with this advice to reinforce the current initiatives and the discussion by emphasising a structural approach on the administrative level. The administrative change is not a once-only affair but a continuous process. In future, the Council will therefore compare its own activities and those of the government with the philosophy of "from taking care of to taking care that" to encourage the debate about this subject. The advice is published in October 2006.

4. The Netherlands, and the European policy on the rural country

The European discussion about the future Common Agricultural Policy will take place in 2007 and 2008. The European sphere of influence concerning the Common Agricultural Policy is very much determined by Germany and France. In the six-month rotating presidency, Germany is in the chair in the first half of 2007, and France in the second half. A mid-term review of the CAP (also referred to as the *Health check*) and the Financial Agreement for the 2007 – 2013 term will be drawn up, and are being prepared by the European Commission. One of the subjects of the *Health check* will be an evaluation of the *cross compliance* (enforcement, and the attaching administrative expenses). The 2008/2009 discussion on EU level will be centred on the policy after 2013. When a vision on the future is developed, the separate countries can provisionally sort out their own course of action. Through the collaboration agreement between the EEAC European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils, the Council is involved in the European discussion; the Council chairs the agricultural working group of the EEAC.

From a societal perspective, the Council wants to give an opinion on the CAP as an instrument to facilitate and safeguard the management and the quality of the rural area in order to realise societal objectives. The time schedule is provisionally set at 2020. It involves objectives concerning food safety, food quality, renewable energy and resources, sustainable development of the rural country, but also the quality of the landscape, the environment and nature. The basic question will be what Dutch society expects from the rural area and the agricultural sector, and what society is willing to contribute. The agricultural sector still covers about 70% of the total surface, in which dairy farms and arable farming take a leading role. We will deal with the question of the continuity of these agricultural sectors as a whole, that is to say, these forms of land use, and the individual enterprises and the conditions on which this is possible. What is true of the allegations that we see more and more of these agriculture-less areas?

The question that follows is: what course is open to a future for land-related agriculture that also contributes to the quality of the rural area: must pricing policy and income policy be geared towards agriculture (1st pillar), must there be a shift of resources to the rural area policy (2^e pillar) or are there other options? To be more concrete, we will elaborate on modulation, cross compliance and redefining the priorities of the 2nd pillar. The vision on the world after 2013 must serve as a guide: the possibilities for any adjustments in the near future will become evident after *back casting*. The less the CAP works via market measures, the less necessity for full Community financing. Options that then emerge are co-financing, or national financing.

The transition to another policy in the CAP requires precision; recent reports by Alterra and LEI Agricultural Economics Research Institute on direct payment to farmers show drastic shifts between areas, sectors and agricultural enterprises for the choice of other formulas (*flat rate*). Other interesting partners in the question of a financial basis of managing the rural area are organisations that manage terrain; Farmers have been called in to manage their terrain, but they feel that it has become more difficult to make farmers want to do this.

Members of the working group

H.J. (Huib) Silvis, chair
J.T.G.M. (Koos) Koolen
J. (Jannie) Lamberts
prof. M.J.A. (Marjan) Margadant-van Arcken
E.A. (Agneta) Andersson, project leader
G. (Gert) van der Bijl, project leader
A.S. (Anne) Bruinsma, junior project leader

Planning

The advice will be issued in 2007.

5. Food Quality

The Council will start its advisory programme on food quality in early 2007. In 2006, the Council will explore the subject of 'food quality with added value', which means food quality with added value such as food safety, safe food, healthy food, food as culture and life style, animal welfare, the environment, nature and landscape, local products, a fair price, information systems, enjoyment, ease, authenticity, justice, etc. In its advice, the Council will also pay attention to the weighing-up process of values and risk assessment, and risk policy.

Members of the working group

M.J.A.(Marjan) Margadant-van Arcken
M.C. (Marijke) van Schendelen
H.J. (Huib) Silvis
C.A. (Karin) Olsthoorn, project leader

Planning

The advice programme on food quality will start early 2007.

6. Holland's Southern Wing

A request for advice on the Programme for the Southern Wing Area and the forthcoming connected letter is now being prepared. The letter about the Southern Wing contains government decisions that are soon to be realised by the government. The advice will be used for the further programme of the Southern Wing programme to prepare a government position. The advice will be prepared by a working group consisting of members of the Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management and the Council for the Rural Area. The Southern Wing programme is the result of the 'Memorandum on Spatial Planning' and the related details (including the Memorandums on Mobility, Peaks in the Estuary, Agenda for a Vital Rural Area, and the Action Programme Spatial Planning and Culture). The Southern Wing programme is one of the four area-oriented programmes and is instituted within the framework of the Implementation Agenda of the Memorandum of Spatial Planning, and is related to the southern wing of the *Randstad* conurbation. The aim of the programmes is to ensure the coordination of governmental influence, acceleration of decision-making and reinforcing the internal coherence within the programmes.

Members of the working group

- dr. M.C. van Schendelen, Council for the Rural Area
- F. Tielrooij, Council for the Rural Area
- prof.dr. P. Tordoir, Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
- drs. A. Rijckenberg, Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
- mr. H.M. Meijdam, Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
- dr. R.L. Vreeman, Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management
- ir. E.J. Verroen, Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Samenstelling secretariaat

- dr. T.H.C. Zwanikken, Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, secretary
- B.H. van Leeuwen, project leader Council for the Rural Area
- drs. W.M.M. Okkerse, project Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management

Planning

The advice will be issued in March 2007.

7. The world on paper versus practice, the tragedy of good intentions

In spite of the good intentions of administrators, the business world and citizens, and in spite of many much-appreciated recommendations, it appears that in actual practice the steering is bogged down in pious paper intentions. But meanwhile the quality of the rural area is decreasing at a high rate. Many are getting annoyed about the apparent uncontrollable messing up of the Netherlands on which nobody seems to have a grip. On the basis of a historic analysis of a number of cases, the Council wants to sort out why the paper policy does not become reality in the rural area. In addition, the

Council wants to detect and value the successful practices, and investigate how they can contribute to getting a grip again on stagnated processes. The core question of this advice is focussed on the regulating capacity of the government.

Members of the working group

F. Tielrooy, Chair
T.L. (Tracy) Metz
prof. dr. M.J.W. (Mark) van Twist
drs. C.J.G.M. (Kees Jan) de Vet
drs. P.C.M. (Paul) Levelink, project leader

Planning

The planning is not yet known.

8. The role of the province in the rural area, and area-oriented activities

Within the framework of the Investment Budget for the Rural Area, the provinces have taken the overall steering function for implementing the long-term programme for the rural area. They have the task of formulating integral policy and consistently interweaving sectorial policy tasks per area and hence have taken over from the Ministry a large part of the implementation responsibility for the rural area. A logical consequence of this is that the Council will urgently discuss with the provinces about its advisory role for the provinces. The first subject for advice within this frame is focussed on area-oriented activities.

The provinces have expeditiously proceeded with this duty within the framework of the Organisation of the Rural Area Act (WILG) and adapted their own organisation and method of working by focussing on implementability and accountability. The area-oriented approach is the key concept in this issue.

The provinces need flexibility and scope for policy-making in the sectorial government instructions to be able to translate this in an area-oriented approach. Another provincial task is to make clear and accountable arrangements with local stakeholders, while still giving room to the stakeholders' initiatives and own priorities. The Council will explore this theme together with the provinces, and will specify the issue in greater detail.

Members of the working group

B.J.M. (Ben) van Essen, Chair
J.T.G.M. (Koos) Koolen
J. (Jannie) Lamberts
R. (Renze) Brouwer, project leader

Planning

The advice will be issued at the end of 2007.

9. National Agricultural Infrastructure

On account of the parliamentary debate of the memorandum 'Opting for Agriculture' by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Safety, the issue was whether the development of a National Agricultural Infrastructure in addition to a National Ecological Network would be sensible. Our Agricultural Minister Veerman requested the Council to analyse this subject and include it in the Council's working programme. In formulating the request for advice, the issues that must be dealt with are:

- Will such structure pave the way to legal inequality and insecurity?
- If the government designate an area as agricultural area, are there still other options? What are the consequences of being designated? Would we be flouting the function of agriculture as decorator of the landscape with this system? Would the rural area be transformed into a parkland?
- The concept of National Agricultural Infrastructure has already been implemented in the Province of Brabant. What are the experiences: would this concept be contributory to a useful solution for the problems in the rural area?

Preliminary composition of the working group

J.T.G.M. (Koos) Koolen

M.C. (Marijke) van Schendelen
J. (Jannie) Lamberts
P.C.M. (Paul) Levelink, project leader

Planning

The advice on the National Agricultural Infrastructure is expected to be issued in early 2007.

10. Strategic agenda

During its entire term of office, the Council will develop activities to identify strategic themes and place them on the agenda. This 'strategic agenda' is meant to have a key theme in its own recommendations, to foster the Council's yearly programming and also to inspire the agendas of other parties. These activities can take place in a conference, a meeting, during discussions, but even during other forms of activities. At the centre is the forming of an opinion about (the importance of) developments in the rural area with the help of input from societal organisations, the business communities and various government levels.

Members of the working group

C.J.G.M. (Kees Jan) de Vet, Chair
B.J.M. (Ben) van Essen
Prof. M.J.A. (Marjan) Margadant-van Arcken
F. (Frans) Tielrooij
M.J.W. (Mark) van Twist
B.H. (Bas) van Leeuwen, project leader

11. Youth

"The forthcoming theme of Youth and Health will add a new dimension to the societal relevance of the rural area. It is a matter of importance that young people keep in contact with nature, and more generally, with the 'green in the rural area'. The accessibility of the green areas, investing in the accessibility and recreational facilities are important for the Dutch countryside." This is a quotation from the 2007 policy-supporting study programme (Framework letter DLO Agricultural Research Service). The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality makes efforts to encourage the direct contact of young people with their natural environment through numerous activities. Our Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality gave a survey of these activities in his letter to the Lower House of 13 April 2006. The Minister also made known to ask the Council for the Rural Area for advice about youth and nature around them. The Council is presently conducting an exploratory study of youth and nature, youth and agriculture, and youth and food quality.

Members of the working group

M.J.A. (Marjan) Margadant-van Arcken
M.C. (Marijke) van Schendelen
C.J.G.M. (Kees Jan) de Vet, voorzitter
R. (Renze) Brouwer, projectleider

Planning

The study will start in 2007.

12. Bio-based economy

The development of biomass and bio-energy is booming. There are heated discussions in the Netherlands, in Europe and beyond. The question of chances for the Netherlands are still mooted. The Council orients on possible advice on the issue 'Bio-based economy: agricultural crop as 'green resources', opportunities and threats for Dutch agriculture and the rural area. The composition of the working group is not yet decided.

13. Revision of the tentative World Heritage List

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science has requested the Council for Culture and the Council for the Rural Area to advise on the tentative World Heritage List.

In 1972, the UNESCO's General Conference adopted the World Heritage Conference: the agreement to protect the cultural and natural heritage worldwide. The most striking part of this international conference is the possibility for proposing cultural and natural heritage of *outstanding universal value* for being listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. To nominate properties for listing on the World Heritage List, the *state parties* will first draw up a tentative list. In 1994 and 1995, the Netherlands adopted two separate lists for archaeological heritage and built monuments, but a tentative list for natural heritage has not been set. The Minister intends to submit a revised list for the Netherlands to UNESCO before 1 February 2007. It is important to take the natural heritage of the Netherlands into consideration when reviewing the tentative list.

Members of the working group

M.C. (Marijke) van Schendelen

P.C.E. van Wijmen

dr. B.H. (Bas) van Leeuwen, projectleider

Planning

The Minister asked both Councils to recommend in a joint or harmonised advice which sites or properties (built monuments, archaeological monuments, man-made landscapes, nature areas) qualify and which of them must be included in the tentative list.