

# Working Programme 2004

## Subjects

### Introduction

The Council for the Rural Area has planned a large number of activities for 2004: advice will be given on nine subjects. The 2004 working programme contains three subjects on which the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality asked advice:

1. Glasshouse horticulture,
2. National landscapes,
3. Developing quality in rural areas.

In addition, the Council will draw up an advisory report on its own initiative:

4. the advice on the future shape of the European Union's policy on agriculture and rural areas, and
5. the advice 'Green and Red in Balance'.

As planned in the 2003 Working Programme, the Council will draw up four advisory reports; three of which were already published at the beginning of this year:

6. 'Policy on Animal Diseases with Societal Support',
7. 'Recreation in the Countryside',
8. 'Rural Area at the Helm',
9. The advisory report on education for the green sectors will be published in June 2004.

Together with the Council's involvement in activities of other councils, such as in the advisory report 'Building in the Rural Areas' drawn up by the Council of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and the advisory report 'Nature and Health' drawn up by the Health Council, and with the presidency of the Agriculture working group of the joint European Advisory Councils, this is an ambitious, topical and broad programme.

### 1. Glasshouse horticulture

The Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality will view the request for advice on glasshouse horticulture in the light of the developments which were taking place last year when the Memorandum on Spatial Planning was written. The Minister is of the opinion that the Memorandum on Spatial Planning passes the responsibilities onto the provinces and the municipalities to which the spatial planning is related much more than before. Furthermore, the Government gives in spatial policy special attention to restructuring the existing but outdated glasshouse horticulture areas. To make this possible, the Government deems it necessary to relocate these enterprises. The Minister is of the opinion that the larger role provinces must play within the framework of the Memorandum on Spatial Planning has consequences for the roles and responsibilities of all parties that are involved in, in this case, glasshouse horticulture. The Minister asks himself what these roles and responsibilities amount to, and how the various parties will handle it. The Minister furthermore wishes to gain insight into the future (desirable) development possibilities of the glasshouse horticulture (chain), as this may be of paramount importance for the space needed for this sector or this chain.

The Council expects the advice to be published in October 2004.

### 2. National landscapes

The Memorandum on Spatial Planning describes national landscapes as areas with internationally rare and nationally characteristic landscape qualities and their related natural and recreational qualities. The government intends to maintain, manage and strengthen the scenic, historico-cultural and natural qualities, and to increase their recreational and commercial importance. The policy on National Landscapes makes spatial developments possible provided that the core qualities of the landscape are maintained or developed (the principle is: yes, provided that...). Large-scale extension and development of new glasshouse horticulture, new large-scale infrastructure projects and large-scale extension and new urbanisation are not allowed in these areas.

The provinces are responsible for the implementation of the policy on National Landscapes, which lays down the final boundaries of the National Landscapes in their regional planning, and further defines the identified core qualities for each National Landscape. These are the guidelines for the

spatial development. The most recent draft of the Memorandum of Spatial Planning mentions nineteen areas to be allocated.

The government identifies for each National Landscape the core values and qualities, thus pointing out the direction of the spatial development. The government checks how provinces deal with this issue, both with respect to content and to process. Via co-funding, the government will contribute towards investments and management costs. Maintaining through development is the basis, the landscape characteristics of the area will form a very strong and valuable footing for the development of the area.

The Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality described the question as follows: in what way and with what instruments will the policy targets for the National Landscapes be most effectively and efficiently realised? Special attention will be given to agriculture, nature and recreation in the National Landscapes, but also to the question what new functions would also contribute to an economically sustainable basis for these areas.

The Council will publish the advisory report in October 2004.

### **3. Developing quality in rural areas**

The Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality described the request for advice in the 2003 working programme as follows:

"The quality in the rural area that we now cherish but cannot maintain, was formed as a by-product of economic functions in the past. Examples are attractive landscapes, biodiversity, social cohesion, safety, peace and quiet, darkness, clean water, cultural identity. However, the vast dynamics in the past 40 years have seem to bungle the existing values without creating new ones. The landscape is getting muddled, regional identity lost and ecological values are disappearing. We had to make the best of a bad job with sectorial measures: a National Ecological Network, silence zones, Belvedere Memorandum, but it did not give a coherent whole with quality."

The problem will even increase if prospects for building in the rural area become more real without paying attention to the quality of the rural area.

The Council was asked to advise on the following:

- What strategies can be adopted to shape to the described developments in such a way that on balance the qualities in the rural area increase.
- In what way can the government and the provincial and municipal authorities operate to at least 'monitor' the present qualities in the country.
- What wishes of the population must be taken into account when further development in the rural area is planned. How to make these decisions?
- In what way can e.g. development contribute to the vitality of the rural area. Should the needed space for the rural residents be created by building new villages, or by extending the existing villages?
- Give an opinion on the implementation and the operation of the Development-oriented Strategy on the Landscape.

The Council intends to publish the advice at the end of 2004.

### **4. EU policy on agriculture and rural areas**

The reforms of the European policy on agriculture and rural areas are going to take place: there will be a new Rural Area Directive in 2006. The agricultural sector and the rural area in Europe and the Netherlands are involved in a complex and not very coherent transition process without clear targets. By its nature and its lack of coherence of partial processes on the different scale levels, this transition seems to have gone adrift somewhere. The developments in agriculture will take a turn that can lead to irreversible loss of existing collective values of the rural area. Developments in the region peter out because of national and European regulations. A shared vision of government and society on the development of the rural area and the agricultural sector is needed to pursue an integrated rural policy and to direct the transition that is now taking place. Together with (experienced) experts in the region and on the national and European levels, the Council is presently engaged in initiating such vision. The opinions of the persons involved are probed in a series of roundtable discussions and field excursions. The Council expects to publish the advice on the future implementation of EU policy on agriculture and the rural area on its own initiative in July 2004.

## **5. Green and Red in balance**

The Memorandum on Spatial Planning has incorporated the maintenance and the improvement of the rural area (Green) and urbanisation (Red) as the basis of the government policy. The present government policy on the interrelationship of the rural area and the urban area is also shaped through the ISV Investment Budget for Urban Renewal and for spatial planning. The objectives of this policy are the additional sum of the objectives within the framework of the Memorandum on Nature for People, Conurbation Greenbelt, the SGR1 First Planning for Green Areas, the VINAC Update of the Extra Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning. Authorities other than the government are working on the interrelationship between green areas and urban areas, such as the provincial and the municipal authorities but also contractors for building projects. However, finding a proper balance between the green areas and urbanisation is very important because green areas are a contributory factor in liveability and public health and social cohesion and integration in cities, in economic prospects to establish a business in European context and in strengthening the urban function to unburden the rural area.

The Council gives this advice on its own initiative, and directs its attention to the desired role of the Government. Many responsibilities for realising the balance lie with parties other than the government. The Government is a participant playing a direct role (funding, programming) and an indirect role (statements of intent on the balance between green and red areas, quotas for housing, spatial policy, financial policy, mobility policy, among other things). This makes that the Government is not only a participant but it also has influence on all other participants at the negotiation table, and also creates conditions that determine the outcome of the negotiations. This influencing role appears to be more influential than the independent own role.

The advisory report will indicate in what way the existing obstacles for realising a proper balance between Green and Red can be removed. The questions are:

- Is there a real discrepancy between Green and Red?
- What are the present barriers for a proper balance between Green and Red?
- What policy is needed to remove these barriers?
- What possibilities can specific instruments offer, such as the Red for Green policy, adjustment of the Investment Budget for Urban Renewal and the Investment Budget for the Rural Area, strengthening the administrative relationship between urban areas and rural areas, knowledge development, process support, the efforts of the DLG Service for Land and Water Management and Forestry, and private and agricultural nature management?
- What is the responsibility and the role of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality in implementing the policy? What is the role of other parties (municipalities, provinces, the market, the people)? What is the relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture and the municipalities?

Several studies came out with a great number of suggestions to improve the relationship between Green and Red. The advisory report will primarily be based on the offered solutions, and is supplemented with other solutions where necessary.

The publication of this report is expected in October 2004.

## **6. Policy on Animal Diseases with societal support**

### **Advisory report on combating highly contagious animal diseases**

The advisory report on societal acceptance of combating highly contagious animal diseases was prepared in 2003; the report was presented to Cabinet Minister Veerman (Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality) at a press conference on 6 February 2004. The advice gives an answer to the Minister's question how policy can take better account of societal values and interests in combating highly contagious animal diseases. Recent outbreaks of Avian Influenza, Foot & Mouth Disease and Classical Swine Fever made at least one thing clear: there is no societal support for the manner in which these outbreaks were handled. Preventive emergency slaughter of all animals within a circle around an infected farm has far-reaching social, psychological and economic consequences. A representative survey of the Dutch population showed that, out of respect for the animals' natural course of life, the majority rejected the killing of healthy animals. However, because of the policy of the European Union and the export restrictions, it is difficult for the Dutch government to resolve the dilemma over the policy that has so far been pursued, and the policy society wants. A solution may be found in an adjustment of the policy that can only be implemented with the efforts of all stakeholders from the entire society.

### *Recommendations to the Government*

The Government can reduce large-scaled culling by vaccinating the animals in case of an outbreak. Vaccinations with marker vaccines make it possible to distinguish between the vaccinated and the infected animals, and will eliminate or at least strongly reduce the problem that animals are no longer marketable after vaccination. The councils endorse the Cabinet's efforts to adjust EU's non-vaccination policy. It is also necessary to improve the communication about the policy. The Government must keep state control and the final responsibility for halting highly contagious animal diseases and, for competitive reasons, must permanently bear a part of the costs. Other parties must also accept more responsibilities than is now the case.

### *Recommendations to other parties*

The parties in the food chain itself, farmers, slaughterhouses, the dairy industry, the supermarkets and the consumers, can do much to reduce the risk of an outbreak and its consequences. This starts with a system whereby the animals are kept with more buffer capacity in the stables and with better hygienic conditions, and whereby there is more awareness in the contacts between groups of animals and people and animals. As animal transports always involve risks, they must be strongly reduced. Further regionalizing of the production chain as a whole is unavoidable. As there is no risk involved in consuming products of vaccinated animals, supermarkets, the dairy industry and slaughterhouses must therefore guarantee the sale of vaccinated animals.

### *Reaction on the policy, and continued effect*

The Council has not yet received a reaction from the Cabinet, but recommendations from this advice have been included in the Minister's reaction on the external evaluation of the Avian Influenza Crisis (ref.: VVA 2004/1097 dated 15 April 2004).

## **7. Recreation in the countryside**

### **Advice on the way in which government, trade & industry and societal organisations can arrange for recreation in the future**

The Council approved its advice 'recreation in the green area' in October 2003, and presented it to Mr. Veerman, Cabinet Minister for Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality, at the annual RECRON congress on January 28, 2004. The main message of the advice on recreation in our country was that recreation must again be on the political agenda. Recreation (and tourism) is an important sector in the Netherlands: a turnover of more than € 26 billion, 350,000 jobs, one billion day trips and about 9 million short and 9 million long holidays. The Council found that the policy area of recreation had been neglected, in particular by the government. Central government, provinces, municipalities, the Recreation Boards and the District Water Boards must expressly be involved in the policy on recreation. It is important to realise that recreation is not an isolated policy field but is in many ways connected and overlaps with the policy fields of almost all ministries, such as the ministries of sports, culture, nature, health and welfare. The Council advises that the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality should shoulder the primary responsibility for recreation on the national level.

The Council also observed that city dwellers spend less and less days in the country but instead find other sorts of recreational activities, like fun shopping, parading and walking in the city, cycling, amateur fishing, visiting parks. Cities have too few green recreation areas for its population, such as parks and public gardens. This is why the Council believes that there is an important task for the government and the municipalities to arrange for a better and ampler supply of green (recreation) areas, especially in the older districts and the new housing estates. The Council realises that planning more green areas in the town also means that new housing developments on the outskirts will move up further into the countryside. However, this is better than with hindsight creating new green recreation spaces in that same countryside so far away from town that city dwellers will hardly go there.

Much can, and must, be changed about recreation outside town. The rural area must be opened more broadly for recreation and should not be seen as a transition area between towns and nature areas. Farmers must have more opportunity than at present to offer recreational facilities besides their agricultural enterprise. And within the ecological preconditions, parts of nature areas can be planned

for new forms of recreation, as a result of which other communities will visit these nature areas. However, part of the nature areas must be reserved for 'tranquillity, space and silence'.

Camping sites, holiday parks and yacht-basins will often need renovation and extension because their guests require more space and quality. The Council holds the opinion that in most cases efforts must be made to build the annexes to the existing enterprise. The possibilities are of course limited if an enterprise is located in a vulnerable nature area, but by proper marketing, the entrepreneur can attract a public that appreciates such an environment.

*Reaction on the policy, and continued effect*

The Council has not yet received an official reaction from the Cabinet.

## **8. Rural area at the helm**

### **Advice on innovative forms of governance for the rural area**

Mr Veerman, Cabinet Minister for Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality, asked the Council to advise on new forms of management for the rural area. After extensive consultation with administrators and experts, the Council analysed the experiences they had with area-oriented policies. This analysis led to the conclusion that changes in the rural area demand a reorientation on the role between the various authorities, and between government and society.

The Council holds the provinces first responsible for realising the (governmental) targets in the region. They do this in collaboration with the municipalities, district water boards, the residents and their organisations. The central government outlines the policies, but only in exceptional cases will it be involved in the implementation of the policy. The central government and the provinces should not be together in one meeting hall with societal organisations, entrepreneurs and communities. The spirit of the new method must be: "The province is implementing, no prying government eyes in the County Hall."

The Council deems it advisable that the Minister should establish clear priority for the distribution of funds between the provinces, and should conclude performance-based contracts with each province. These performance-based contracts stipulate the agreements between the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality and the provinces about the investment of the funds. For the central government, these contracts can also form the basis for entering into an agreement with the European Union on financial support for the development of the rural area.

The Council advises that the provinces and municipalities, in their own targets for the rural area, should give enough leeway for initiatives of communities, entrepreneurs and individual residents. It is advisable that the provincial and municipal administrators should report in an annual citizens' report what initiatives had been produced by citizens and communities and how these initiatives have affected the policy. It should also be reported what initiatives of the citizenry have not been taken up, and why not.

The Council holds the view that activating the community demands a charismatic administrator in the area, such as an (ex-)official, an (ex-)alderman or a burgomaster. The provincial executives must strongly and visibly support this administrator. The working process can often be improved by a 'source of inspiration' from the area. The Council has in mind enthusiast persons who often do not fit in with the existing patterns and who operate in an unconventional way, who possess an intuitive judgement and who know how to hold on to others. The Council deems it desirable that the province and the region together with municipalities make it possible to have easily accessible facilities, such as country houses. Here demand and supply from government and society meet, and innovative initiatives are supported.

For funding area-oriented policy, the Council deems it desirable to amalgamate the various government budgets for the SGB subsidy scheme for area-oriented policy, land development, soil sanitation, the Green Heart, etc. on the national level into one flow of money: the ILG Investment Budget for the Rural Area. The provinces must set up funds for the area with Groenfonds or commercial banks, and are in charge of generating financial means from third parties. The provinces must also take initiatives to attract European co-financers.

The advisory report was presented to Agriculture Minister Veerman on 8 April 2003.

### *Working conference 'Setting out for a new generation of area-oriented policy'*

To prepare the advisory report "Rural Areas at the Helm", the Council, together with the Innovative Network Green Areas and Agrocluster, organised a meeting about interactive management in the rural area on May 8, 2003. This meeting resulted in a publication titled 'Setting out for a new generation of area-oriented policy'. The publication contains several stimulating essays that served as the basis of the conference. Both the meeting and the essays from the compilation were a source of inspiration for the Council for the Rural Area to prepare the advisory report on innovative forms of governance, which was published in April 2004. The Innovative Network Green Areas and Agrocluster further specified the ideas that were brought forward in the meeting in the form of an experiment. Seeing the interest shown in this publication, it was especially the regional authorities and societal organisations that found the expressed concepts very valuable.

### *Reaction on the policy and continued effect*

The Council has not yet received a reaction from the Ministry.

## **9. Education for the green sector**

In 2003, Mr Odink, who was State Secretary for Agriculture at the time, asked advice on education for the green sector. The request for advice was focussed on the developments in the job market in the agricultural sector in the long term (10 years), and the consequences for the participants' knowledge and skills in the labour market. Related questions were the spread of 'green education' related to the accessibility and the location, the Ministry's wish for high quality of the training, and what improvement and substantive steering by the Ministry would be needed to direct the best possible spreading, both related to organisational aspects and to the quality of the direction.

Much was changed in education for the green sector from the time of the first request for advice and its actual start in 2004. Consultation with the Council and representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture made it clear that the first request for advice should no longer be seen as the guiding principle, but the question actually is in which direction green education must be developed, and the way in which the Ministry must capitalize on these developments or must encourage them.

This conversation led to a reformulation of the Ministry's request for advice, and the main questions were now as follows:

- We can now see two trends in the education for the green sector: one focussed on strengthening the monosectorial force by cooperating or merging within its own domain; the second focussed on broadening the domain. So far, the Ministry has not made a choice between these two variants. This leads to two questions:
  1. Must the Minister make a choice between these variants, or must market forces do the job?
  2. From the angle of macro-appropriateness, societal benefit of the education, options for the remuneration system, etc., the Ministry must make a well-founded choice between supporting one of the lines and blocking the other, or supporting both lines.
- The question is whether the educational supply fits in with demands of the labour market, both in relation to education for the green sector and to education for other sectors.

The Council expects the advisory report to be published in June 2004.

## **Involvement in the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment's advice 'Building in the countryside'**

The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment's council worked on an advisory report on 'Building in the Countryside' in 2003, and presented this report in the spring of 2004. This subject is very much of current interest, especially in the light of the Memorandum on Space. That is why the Council for the Rural Area, at the Ministry of Housing's council request, willingly obliged to contribute to the realization of this advisory report: members of the Council were present at the discussion evenings and the general secretary was a member of the working party of the Ministry of Housing's council, which prepared the advisory council.

**Involvement in the advice given by the Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment and the Health Council's 'Nature and Health'.**

The Council for the Rural Area is involved in drawing up an advice focussed on increasing knowledge about the meaning of nature for the people's health and well-being, and to use this knowledge for related policy domains. The Ministries of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality, of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and of Health, Welfare and Sports asked the Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment, Innovative Network Green Areas and Agrocluster, the Council for Research into Health and Hygiene, and the Council for the Rural Area for a mutual advice. The Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment is the driving force behind this advice. The Council for Health and Hygiene made a contribution in the form of a partial scientific advice that included the existing knowledge and the relevance for further foundations of the relationship between nature and health. It also pointed out gaps in knowledge and made recommendations for further basic and applied research. These recommendations were implemented by the Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment's further research whereby, through broad societal consultations, gaps in knowledge are further detailed and proposals were formulated for the necessary knowledge infrastructure, organisational form and funding future research. The Council for the Rural Area made a contribution to the main lines, both as regards the process and the contents, of the realisation of the complete advice. The Advisory Council for Research on Nature and the Environment published the advisory report in May 2004.