

Sustainable food for all

Rapidly growing world population, urbanisation and changing eating habits drive up the demand for high quality, safe and nutritious food. To achieve food security we must change how we produce our food. Our greatest challenge in the next decades is to raise the global food supply and lower the pressure on our planet's most valuable resources. Together, we can accomplish more.



Farming
the
Future

NL

Netherlands



Agriculture is deeply rooted in the Dutch history and culture. In the global fight against hunger and malnutrition, we are keen to share knowledge and expertise to accelerate sustainable food production and responsible use of raw materials and consumption.

Meeting the nutritional needs of 17 million people in a small, low-lying delta region where land is at a premium, farms in the Netherlands are some of the most intensive, sustainable and efficient in the world. In 2018, there were nearly [54,000 agricultural companies](#) in the country. More than half were dairy farms (15,500) and arable farms (10,800). That year, the horticulture sector, which includes arable farms, contributed to [over 1/3 of the total production](#) of the Dutch agriculture sector.

The Dutch agriculture sector contributes around 1.7% of GDP. In 2019, 2% of Dutch population work in agriculture, fishery or forestry. The entire [agri & food sector](#) is valued at around 54 billion euros or 7% of the national economic production.

Export products and knowledge

The Netherlands has cultivated its agricultural knowledge for centuries. It enables us to intensify farming sustainably and grow high-quality produces. Besides agri & food products, we export food processing machinery – from robotic soft-fruit pickers, to automated meat separators, to potato processing.

In 2019, the [export value of our agricultural products](#) reached nearly €75.3 billion. Most of these products were destined for surrounding countries. Export to Germany, for example, counted for about 1/4 of total exports. Horticulture products, dairy, meat, fruit and vegetables are the most frequently exported products. Together they make up roughly 20% of all agricultural exports. In the same period, the value of agriculture machinery export was nearly €10 billion.

Food and beverage industry

The Netherlands continues to innovate to maximise efficiency in food processing and logistics system. Many of the world's top 25 food and beverage companies have production and logistical facilities in the Netherlands, including Dutch born global players such as Heineken, Friesland-Campina and DSM.

In 2017, the turnover of the Dutch food and beverage industry was around €77 billion. Key industries are dairy processing (turnover of €13.5 billion), meat processing (€11.7 billion) and potato, fruit and vegetable processing (€5.7 billion). In 2019, around 6,200 [food and beverage processors](#), providing employment to some 140,000 people. [Food production](#) is mainly concentrated in the provinces of North- and South-Holland and in North-Brabant.

Foreign investment

Internationalisation in the agri & food sector is visible in the [foreign direct investments](#), which reached nearly €170 billion in 2018. Conversely, Dutch enterprises invested almost €520 billion in foreign agri and food companies. Altogether, they had 165 subsidiaries outside of the European Union.

Research and development

The Dutch agri & food expertise encompasses the entire food chain, including starting materials, irrigation techniques, quality control, packaging and logistics. We're harnessing all our knowledge and expertise to fast track the transition towards sustainable farming.

With new developments such as ultra-local fertilisation or spraying, closed circuits production and satellite-guided farming we could offer new prospects and means to reduce ecological footprints.

The Netherlands is renowned as a hotbed of agri & food research and development, largely due to the excellent knowledge base at our universities, research institutes and industrial R&D centres. The Dutch government supports these initiatives via public-private partnerships, innovation programmes, and clusters such as 'Food Valley' - one of the most authoritative agri & food and nutrition research centres in Europe.

The Netherlands is also home to NIZO food research, Europe's largest food testing pilot plant. R&D expenditure on the food industry accounts around 915 million euros annually. Among the top-100 spenders on R&D in the Netherlands are no less than 13 agri & food companies.

Let's farm the future together!

www.farmingthefuture.nl or learn more about the Dutch Top Sector Agri & Food: <https://topsectoragrifood.nl>