

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: October 04, 2022

Report Number: NL2022-0051

Report Name: New Minister of Agriculture Named in the Netherlands

Country: Netherlands

Post: The Hague

Report Category: Agriculture in the News, Agricultural Situation

Prepared By: FAS/The Hague Staff

Approved By: Christopher Riker

Report Highlights:

On October 3, 2022, the Dutch government announced Mr. Piet Adema has been named the new Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality. Mr. Adema replaces Henk Staghouwer who resigned in September after he informed the Dutch Cabinet and Parliament about his Ministry's delay in providing a plan for the future outlook of the Dutch agricultural sector and after he failed to obtain Brussels' permission to continue to exceed caps on how much manure farmers can apply to their fields. Since Mr. Staghouwer's resignation, Carola Schouten (currently the third Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands and the Minister for Poverty Policy, Participation, and Pensions, and the former Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality) had been acting as interim Minister (until a permanent replacement was identified).

Background

Dutch agriculture has been under considerable pressure in recent months as the government aims to reduce nitrogen greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions stemming from Dutch farms. On June 10, 2022, the Dutch government presented a report which laid out objectives for the reduction of nitrogen GHG emissions.¹ The report included a map identifying the nitrogen reductions that are to be realized, by area, in the Netherlands² -- ranging from 12 to 70 percent.³ In areas located by “[Natura2000](#)” nature reserves, the government aimed to reduce nitrogen emissions by 95 percent or more. For additional information about the Dutch nitrogen reduction policies, see [Government Presents National Program to Reduce Nitrogen Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Rural Areas](#). In a subsequent press conference, Prime Minister Rutte made it clear that the Dutch agricultural sector will “look different” in the future, or as the report stated: “there is not a future for all [Dutch farmers] within this approach.” This gave rise to a series of Dutch farmer protests in the summer of 2022. For more information see [Dutch Farmer Protests Against New Nitrogen GHG Emissions Reductions Policies](#).

As a result of the social unrest surrounding the reduction of nitrogen emissions, Johan Remkes was appointed to serve as a mediator between the farmers and government, at the request of the Dutch House of Representatives.⁴ On Monday, September 5, 2022, the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality, Henk Staghouwer, informed the House of Representatives that Mr. Remkes will present his findings in the second half of September (NOTE: this was later delayed until October 5, 2022) and noted that these findings will have a direct impact on the future for Dutch agricultural entrepreneurs.⁵ Accordingly, Staghouwer emphasized that he would like to include Mr. Remkes’ findings in his own plan for the future outlook of the Dutch agricultural sector, and, in turn, could not present his plan by the established deadline (i.e., before Prinsjesdag - September 20, 2022 - when the Dutch government’s annual budget is presented). For more information on the government’s 2023 agricultural budget, see [NL2022-0050: In King's Speech Circular Agriculture is Cited as the Future for Dutch Farming](#).

In addition, on September 5, 2022, it was reported that the Netherlands had lost its ability to exceed caps on how much manure farmers can return to their fields.⁶ A draft derogation decision that the European Commission shared with European Union Member States noted Dutch farmers can still apply for a full derogation for the spreading of manure in 2022. However, a gradual phasing-out will take place in the following years until 2025. In 2026, Dutch farmers will no longer be provided an exception to spread more manure than 170 kg per hectare, a so-called derogation.⁷

Shortly after these developments, on the evening of September 5, 2022, Minister Staghouwer, announced his resignation after nine months of duty, noting that he recently concluded he “was the wrong man for the job.” For additional information, see [NL2022-0048: Dutch Minister of Agriculture Nature and Food Quality Resigns](#).

¹ See [NL2022-0035 Government Presents National Program to Reduce Nitrogen Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Rural Areas](#)

² <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2022/06/10/startnotitie-nplg-10-juni-2022>, p. 33

³ These objectives are based on a model that calculated current nitrogen deposition in soils. The goal behind the plan is to reduce overall Dutch nitrogen GHG emissions by 50 percent by 2030. In addition, 74 percent of the Netherlands’ “Natura 2000” areas will have to be at “a healthy level” by 2030.

⁴ <https://nltimes.nl/2022/07/03/many-people-support-farmers-cause-method-remkes-appointed-mediator>

⁵ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2022/09/05/keuzes-voor-de-toekomst-van-de-landbouw>

⁶ <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/805878562/nieuw-onheil-voor-boeren-dreigt-mestbeleid-definitief-op-de-schop>

⁷ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/09/05/financiele-transitietegemoetkoming-voor-afbouwen-derogatie>

Temporary Minister Installed Until a Permanent Replacement Could be Found

The Dutch government turned to Carola Schouten, Staghouwer's predecessor, who is also the third Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands and the sitting Minister for Poverty Policy, Participation, and Pensions, to temporarily helm the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality. Ms. Schouten was familiar with the nitrogen dossier as well as Dutch agriculture and had negotiated extensively with Dutch parties on the approach to reduce nitrogen emissions during the previous cabinet (when she served as Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality). Despite Ms. Schouten's experience, Christian Union party leader, Gert-Jan Segers, noted that a permanent replacement would be found within the party (NOTE: both Ms. Schouten and Mr. Staghouwer are Christian Union party members).

Permanent Replacement Identified Quickly

In less than one month, and ahead of the release of Mr. Remkes' heavily anticipated report on October 5, 2022, the Dutch government announced Mr. Piet Adema would be the next Minister of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality in the Netherlands. Mr. Adema is well-known in Dutch politics as the former chairman (not be confused with party leader) of the Christian Union party (from 2013-2021), as a former member of the Provincial Executive of the Dutch province of Friesland, and a former mayor of Achtkarspelen (in the province of Friesland), Tynaarlo (in the province of Drenthe), and Borger-Odoorn (in the province of Drenthe).



Image Source: <https://www.christenunie.nl/k/n29626/news/view/867946/347467/piet-adema-aangesteld-als-waarnemend-burgemeester-borger-odoorn.html>

In his first comments after being announced, Mr. Adema stated, “{y}es, things have to change and most livestock farmers, arable farmers, horticulturists and fishermen know and want that too.”⁸ He continued farmers have to have “clarity, peace, and security” for their future, adding “{o}nly then can trust in the government grow again.”⁹ He later added, “{n}itrogen is going to affect us all, as a complete society. The focus was too one-sided on the farmers.”¹⁰

⁸ See <https://www.gelderlander.nl/politiek/oud-partijvoorzitter-christenunie-woordt-nieuwe-minister-van-landbouw-ja-er-moeten-dingen-anders~a11b6523/>

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ See <https://nos.nl/artikel/2446902-adema-nieuwe-landbouwminister-focus-te-eenzijdig-op-de-boeren>

Mr. Adema faces a series of challenges in the coming months as he tries to address the angst that exists within the Dutch agricultural community. While the government aimed to allocate billions of euros to buy out livestock farmers in an effort to reduce nitrogen emissions, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (known by its Dutch acronym of PBL) recently announced that “expectations {for that program} are now too high,” adding “{d}isappointing results and a waste of money are lurking if the cabinet does not change its plans.”¹¹ It remains to be seen how the imminent report from Mr. Remkes will be received by both the government and agricultural sector in the Netherlands.

Attachments:

No Attachments.

¹¹ See, e.g., <https://nos.nl/artikel/2446857-verwachtingen-te-hooggespannen-over-uitkopen-van-boeren>