

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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**Report Name:** Minister Presents Plan to Address Dutch Manure Situation

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**Report Highlights:**

On September 13, 2024, The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security, and Nature presented a plan to address the Dutch manure crisis. This crisis is caused by the (gradual) loss of a Dutch manure derogation under the Nitrate Directive (EU Council Directive 91/676/EEC), and has posed significant difficulties for farmers, while incurring high costs. The plan presents long-term and short-term solutions on national and EU level, outlined in this report. The Dutch Agricultural and Horticultural Organization (LTO) raised serious concerns about the manure crisis plan, calling it "substantively indefensible" and criticizing the lack of immediate relief for farmers.

On September 13, 2024, The new Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security, and Nature, Femke Wiersma, presented [a plan](#) addressing the manure crisis. The Dutch manure situation is result of the (gradual) loss of a manure derogation (exception) under the EU Nitrate Directive ([EU Council Directive 91/676/EEC](#)). Due to this loss, farmers must gradually reduce the amount of manure spread on fields. By 2026, they will have to comply with the general EU threshold of 170 kg of nitrogen within manure, per hectare of land. Because of this, the manure situation has become dire in the Netherlands, disposal is sometimes (close to) impossible, incurring significant costs for farmers.<sup>1</sup>

The Minister aims to pursue long term solutions by discussing the current threshold with the European Commission. Drawing insights from the EU document “[Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU Agriculture](#)”, the Minister intends to advocate for a threshold tailored to specific crops and soil types. While awaiting the outcomes of these discussions, the Minister plans to explore the possibility of a new derogation starting in 2026 and to review the designation of the entire Netherlands as vulnerable zone.<sup>2</sup>

Another potential solution involves Renure, a fertilizer substitute derived from processed manure,<sup>3</sup> which is currently under review within the European Commission for possible authorization. If approved, Renure could be applied above the nitrogen threshold under specific conditions, similar to regular fertilizers.

The Minister will also effectively steer towards a reduction of the livestock sector. This is planned through a new buy-out scheme by 2026 (as part of the government plan) and by substantially increasing the compulsory amount of production/animal rights that are “skimmed” when these rights are sold, such as when livestock farmers sell their business.<sup>4</sup> Other national long-term solutions include significantly lowering manure production ceilings for 2025.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch Agricultural and Horticultural Organization has expressed concern, stating that this change will hit the livestock sector hard. They also noted that pig farming is already “below the sectoral manure ceiling”, and poultry farming “is not putting pressure on the manure market at all”.<sup>6</sup>

Other long-term solutions include continued research into animal feed protein content,<sup>7</sup> investigating feed additives and feed that contribute to lowered greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and exploring the processing of manure into potting soil and substrates. Additionally, research into a required amount of grassland per head of cattle is being pursued.<sup>8</sup>

Short-term solutions are also being proposed to provide immediate relief for farmers. These include stimulating and expanding manure export opportunities, providing support for manure processing (plants), allowing manure spreading two weeks later than originally authorized for 2024, researching the possibility of increasing the

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<sup>1</sup> For all background information, see [NL2024-007 Dutch Loss of Manure Derogation](#).

<sup>2</sup> Vulnerable zone as defined in the Nitrate Directive, p.1 of [NL2024-007 Dutch Loss of Manure Derogation](#).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 4 of [NL2024-007 Dutch Loss of Manure Derogation](#).

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/mest/productierechten-varkens>, <https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/mest/pluimvee>, <https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/mest/fosfaatrechten>.

<sup>5</sup> The Minister thereby already took livestock (and thus manure) reduction into account from current buy-out schemes.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lto.nl/reactie-lto-en-pov-op-mestbrief-minister-wiersma/>

<sup>7</sup> An idea also explored by previous governments in various forms, see for example [NL2020-0041 Dutch Ministry Abandons Controversial Feed Measure to Limit Nitrogen Emissions](#).

<sup>8</sup> Which will address the 2032 Dutch requirement of farms “having to use their entire manure production from cattle on their own land” (definition of the Dutch concept *grondgebondenheid*, as defined on p. 6 <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2019D47235>).

subsidy ceiling for grassland preservation,<sup>9</sup> and evaluating whether the correction for the evaporation of nitrogen in manure can be adjusted to more accurately reflect reality.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the Minister has found grounds to reduce the derogation-free zones from 250 to 100 meters around nitrogen-sensitive Natura2000 areas. In practice, this means that some agricultural land will still be able to use the derogation for 2025 (190 kg of nitrogen per hectare instead of 170 kg). However, this is a short-term solution, as the derogation will end for all Dutch farmers in 2026.

The Dutch Agricultural and Horticultural Organization (LTO) responded to the manure plan, calling it “substantively indefensible and disappointing in terms of process”. They acknowledged that, compared to the previous government's proposal, there are “some good improvements” in this new plan. However, they criticized the lack of short-term perspective, stating “You can't do that to farmers”. The LTO Department of Poultry Farming described the plan as “unpalatable” and an “impassable road”, adding that they will examine how the text will be incorporated into the law. “If there is even a gap, we will challenge the plans legally.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Attachments:**

No Attachments.

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-financiering/behoud-grasland>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2024D33027&did=2024D33027>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.boerderij.nl/bbb-baalt-van-afoming-in-mestplan-nsc-tevreden>