

An eye on the chain

Horticultural produce



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The Netherlands cultivates large volumes of vegetable and plant products, and acts as the turntable for the international trade. Two-thirds of all ornamental plants are marketed via the Netherlands. The country is the market leader in many segments. The chain achieves a suitable balance between supply and demand. Collaboration and innovation enhance the international competitive position. The Department of Trade and Industry is familiar with the chain, identifies and places relevant items on the agenda, and maintains a comprehensive network.

The chain

The horticultural-produce chain encompasses glasshouse horticultural holdings, outdoor horticultural holdings, and suppliers and producers of plant material. This substantial chain cultivates numerous varieties of vegetables, fruit, bulbs, ornamental plants, trees, mushrooms, cabbage, and ware potatoes. These products are marketed or processed immediately following harvesting. This processing relates to packaging subsequent to sale at the auctions or, for example, to the production of fruit juices, gherkins, and applesauce. Trade in horticultural produce is largely liberalized, and is offered little protection or EU support. The chain is increasingly gaining recognition as a major and innovative element of the economy. Increases in scale are a current theme. Suppliers in the glasshouse-construction industry play a special role; they respond quickly to growers' problems, and they devise solutions that can be implemented both at home and abroad. Innovation is achieved by direct contacts, and for this reason it is important that a substantial part of the production capacity is retained in the Netherlands.

Trade and Industry's specific role

Trade and Industry focuses on bringing the various links in the chain into contact with each other. The Department maintains an overall view of the chain, and acts as a lubricant when so required. The Department acts as the contact point for all parties, and refers those parties to other bodies where relevant. Since many of the players are members of the small and medium-sized enterprise sector a specific approach via trade organizations is often required. The implementation of EU regulations falls outside Trade and Industry's focus.

Encouragement of innovation

The horticultural sector is extremely innovative, and the chain arranges for many of these innovations in autonomy. Trade and Industry supports broad initiatives in those areas in which the Department sees challenges confronting the chain.

Assistance

Collaboration within the chain furthers the sector's ability to remain in the vanguard of developments. Trade and Industry participates in reviewing possible areas offering opportunities.

Mediation

Current issues, such as shortage of space or improvements in agrologistics, are not addressed by a single player. Trade and Industry retains an overall view of the chain, whereby any problems are formulated in explicit terms and assigned to the relevant parties. For example, Trade and Industry participates in the discussions relating to the EurepGAP issue, i.e. the criteria to be met for horticultural produce for sale in supermarkets. One aid furthering compliance is the Early Warning & Response System (EWRS), a databank of residue standards for pesticides which is managed by the Horticultural Marketing Board.

Key words for the chain

- turntable
- market leader
- increases in scale
- innovative
- global sales

Key figures

- The Netherlands accounts for 70% of the EU's exports of ornamental plants, and no less than 93% of the exports of bulbs.
- Almost one-quarter of Europe's vegetable exports originate from the Netherlands.
- The horticultural sector accounts for 40% of the Dutch production of agricultural produce whilst the sector occupies just 0.4% of all agricultural land.

Network

The Department of Trade and Industry maintains contacts with various departments, ministries, centres of expertise, and umbrella and trade organizations.

Related fact sheets from the portfolio of the Department of Trade and Industry

- Bilateral Economic Co-operation (BES)
- CLIENT – Streamlining import and export procedures
- Sustainability Labels and Indicators
- Knowledge and Innovation
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Organic Agriculture Market Development
- Market Access for Developing Countries
- Long-Term Energy-Efficiency Agreements
- Plant Export Policy (PEX)
- Platform Agrologistics

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