

Nature for People People for Nature

Policy document for nature, forest and landscape in the 21st century

July 2000

Preamble

This document *Nature for People, People for Nature (policy document for nature, forest and landscape in the 21st century)* sets out Dutch nature policy for the next ten years. This policy is based on the Government's strong belief that nature and landscape are essential contributions to a liveable and sustainable society.

As the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries' policy programme for 1999-2002 Strength and Quality already indicated the present document *Nature for People, People for Nature* takes the place of four previous green policy programmes: the Nature Policy Plan, the Landscape Memorandum, the Forest Policy Plan and the Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity. This document also provides a framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in various sectors (including agriculture, fisheries, tourism and water). The result is a more coherent nature policy approach.

The present document *Nature for People, People for Nature*, does not stand on its own. It builds on previous national policy documents notably on the Memorandum on Spatial Planning), the Fourth Memorandum on Water Management and the Belvedere Memorandum. Together with the policy document Food Production and Rural Areas, *Nature for People, People for Nature* sets out the framework for rural development policy and is a building block for the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning, the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas and the Fourth National Environmental Policy Plan.

This policy document presents the framework for policy on nature, forests, the landscape and biodiversity for the next decade. The government's new strategy is outlined in part one of this document (Strategic Outlines). In part two (Policy Programme) this strategy is translated into a policy programme. In this part, we define the policy objectives and the associated measures and means. The policy spans the next ten years but also looks beyond the targeted date of 2010, to 2020.

In this policy document we challenge society to take its share of the responsibility for the strengthening and renewal of our nature policy.

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Strategic Outlines

1. Nature Policy for 2010 and beyond

1.1 Nature for people, people for nature

Nature for people, people for nature is the central theme of this policy document. The Government has opted for a broader nature policy to do more justice to the significance of nature for society. Investments in nature directly benefit nature itself, but are equally essential to social and economic well-being.

'Nature for people' implies that nature should meet the demands of society and should be within easy reach, accessible and usable. 'People for nature' means that nature should be protected, managed, cultivated and developed by people. However capricious and 'free' nature may be, nature cannot do without the care of man.

In this document the concept of nature is taken in its broadest sense. The term as we use it embraces nature from the wildlife on people's doorstep to the Wadden Sea. This is how most people perceive nature. For most people the distinction between nature, biodiversity, forest and landscape is not very important.

The Government has a major responsibility in protecting and strengthening nature. Nature in the broad sense is in principle a collective good, because the whole of society, now and in future benefits from it and because nature does not come about or is not preserved automatically through the free play of the forces of society.

But the Government also expects society to embrace its responsibility for nature wholeheartedly. Apart from the rights that may be derived from a collective good there are also obligations to be honoured. A better quality of our environment and a wise use of such essential resources as water, land and biodiversity starts with individual people, entrepreneurs and groups in society.

It is with this in mind that the Government wishes to strengthen and renew current nature policy. This implies that it will take responsibility where necessary but also that it will, more than in the past, remind others of their responsibility.

Nature and landscape

The Dutch population has a very diverse perception of nature, ranging from 'sea, sun and wind' to 'trees, warblers and Highland cattle'. In this light it is not easy nor very helpful to come up with a hard definition of nature (source: *Natuurverkenning* 1997). In this document the term nature is used in its broadest sense: nature from the wildlife on our doorstep to the Wadden Sea. We realise that this approach lumps the various perceptions of nature together and that the extent of nature diminishes where the influence of man increases. In the Netherlands we no longer find pristine nature. Although there are still areas where nature reigns supreme the mark of man is visible everywhere. This applies to our Wadden Sea and the coast. And - albeit to a lesser extent - to the woodlands and extensive heaths on the Veluwe. But it also applies to the catkins on the budding birch and hazel trees, the frogs in the ditch, the black-tailed godwit building its nest on an arable field, the singing thrush appearing in a newly built housing estate. All these are phenomena of nature that people can take pleasure in. All phenomena of nature are valuable. In addition to the term nature we also find the term landscape cropping up again and again. Landscape is also manifest in various forms. The term embraces reclaimed land, polders, stream meadows, flood plains, cultivated land on sandy soils, leisurely flowing rivers and lowlands stretching to the horizon. All are characteristic of the Dutch landscape, a co-production by man and nature, a result of the combined dynamics of soil, water, vegetation and land use. From a designer's point of view landscape is the framework for a harmonious integration of functions.

1.2 The international context

Dutch nature policy in its broadest sense must always be seen as part of an international framework. The Netherlands, for instance, is at a junction of international flyways of migratory birds, which makes Dutch nature areas vital links in the global protection of these birds. Within Europe our wetlands in particular are rare.

In an international context, we have a responsibility to preserve, restore and develop the nature and landscape that is characteristic of our country. This presents the Netherlands, an urban delta with enormous natural, economic and cultural potential, with a unique challenge. In many respects our

country is both fertile and vulnerable. We have a large population that must live, work and spend its leisure time on a small area of land, a large part of which lies below sea level. Given these dynamics the responsibility for a healthy environment and a careful use of resources is a daunting task.

In 1992 the Netherlands, among many other countries, signed the Biodiversity Convention in Rio de Janeiro and adopted it as a framework for its national nature policy. Under this Convention signatories are committed to the preservation and sustainable use of genes, species and ecosystems on land, in the water and in the air. Signatories must also realise a fair division of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biodiversity. These agreements are inextricably linked with the global striving for sustainable development. The Netherlands is among the parties responsible for global biodiversity and is committed to assisting the less prosperous countries in realising their part.

In 1998 the European Union transposed the Biodiversity Convention into the Biodiversity Strategy. This Strategy also reflects the interconnectedness of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, Natura 2000, the Ramsar Convention (on the conservation and wise use of wetlands) and the integration of biodiversity in other sectors.

Also in 1992, the Netherlands ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Under this convention countries may present their natural and cultural heritage for the list of World Heritage Sites. The Netherlands, for instance, has presented the Beemster polder and the Stelling van Amsterdam. World Heritage Sites must be managed with special care, thus by presenting certain sites, the Netherlands contributes to the long-term conservation of areas with nature and landscape values of international significance.

1.3 Balanced growth

In the coalition agreement the Government pledged its commitment to sustainable development. One of the essential tasks for all public bodies concerned with the use of land and natural resources is to make adequate provision for development and economic growth whilst ensuring effective conservation of wildlife and natural features. The conservation of nature is important, as nature is an important element of a clean and healthy natural environment. A special challenge in all this is to combine economic growth with the improvement of nature and the environment, or a balanced spatial and economic growth. This, as the coalition agreement has it, implies that sufficient investments must be made in the quality of landscape.

Considering the projected growth of the population and the economy – and the associated spatial planning challenges – we need a policy that firmly integrates economic growth, landscape quality and the identity of our country as a whole and the separate regions. In a society like ours, the rise in prosperity will always have to be accompanied by greater care for the natural environment and for the well-being of all living things. If we want sustainable development this is a condition *sine qua non*. If we, with all our prosperity cannot do it, who can?

1.4 The main objective of Dutch nature policy

This document *Nature for People, People for Nature* sets out the Government's policy for nature, forests and landscapes as part of its broader commitment to improving the quality of the environment. There are three motivations for this:

- We want a beautiful country to live and work in (liveability);
- We want a solid protection of plants, animals and characteristic areas (diversity);
- We want the sustainable use of such essential resources as water, land and biodiversity (utilisation).

To this end the Government has formulated the following main objective for Dutch nature policy:

To make an essential contribution to a liveable and sustainable society through the conservation, restoration, development and sustainable use of nature and landscape.

This main objective should be read in an international context and must also be seen as a cultural challenge. This is about nature and landscape for and by people.

2. Ten years of Dutch nature policy: successes, problems and opportunities

The quality of nature in our country has deteriorated severely over the last century. We are now left with half the nature areas we had one hundred years ago and these are very much fragmented and damaged by acidification, eutrophication, groundwater depletion and poisoning. The 1999 *Natuurbalans* (Nature Balance Report) by the Nature Assessment Bureau shows that since 1950 nature in agricultural areas has declined by 60%. As a consequence most of what remains of nature is now primarily found within the boundaries of the National Ecological Network where it is protected by conservation schemes.

The Dutch landscape has also deteriorated in quality. This is the result of large-scale urbanisation, increased mobility and highly intensive, large-scale agricultural production. To some extent this decline has come about stealthily.

The observation that the quality of nature is deteriorating is not new. It was this realisation that led to the establishment of nature organisations devoted to the conservation of nature in our country. After a century of nature conservation and ten years of experience with the last batch of nature policy plans the time has come to take stock of what has been achieved so far.

2.1 Successes of Dutch nature policy

Nature policy in the Netherlands of recent years has seen a number of successes as is evident from nature reports and the evaluation of Dutch nature, forest and landscape policy.

- The most notable success in this respect is the realisation of the National Ecological Network. Although it will not be fully in place until 2018, we are now for the first time in years witnessing an increase in nature area. The concept of ecological networks is also successfully applied in international circles.
- The concept of integrated forest management has over recent years been accepted on a large scale and has made our woodlands more attractive for nature and recreation. Various woodland bird species have made a comeback since changes have been made to the age classes, timber species and structure of our woodlands.
- Forest policy has given a boost to the planting of trees in urban areas although the pace of this process could still be stepped up. Planting trees is one way of meeting the demand for greener cities.
- Various development and management strategies have borne fruit. Restoration measures under the Forest and Nature Survival Plan, and measures to combat groundwater depletion have worked: hundreds of plant species that were endangered or locally extinct are back again or thriving once more. For example, the number of spoonbills breeding in the Netherlands has doubled over 1994-1998 (*Natuurbalans 1999*), and we now support almost half of Western Europe's spoonbill population.
- New design concepts such as the 'framework concept' of the Landscape Memorandum and 'ecology-inclusive planning' of the Forest and Nature Survival Plan are starting to become more generally accepted. Municipal councils themselves have, with others or on their own, started drawing up landscape planning policies. Land development is proving to be an excellent instrument for landscape design.
- With the 1995 Programme for International Nature Management, and as part of the Government's policy for development cooperation, we have intensified our contribution to the global fight against the loss of biodiversity. Both in relative and in absolute terms the Netherlands is a leading contributor to programmes and projects aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and thus meets the UNCED agreement to use 0.1% of its Gross National Product for international nature and environment policy. With the help of Dutch funding it was, for instance, possible to buy and protect more than 100,000 ha of nature reserve in Central and Eastern Europe. We also helped to launch programmes for agriculture and nature management there.

Although it cannot be put down to nature policy alone, it is a fact that society's support for nature management is growing. More and more people are joining nature organisations. The number of farmers and private landowners managing nature and landscape, in co-operative groups or otherwise, has also risen sharply. Agri-environment schemes are in effect for about 60,000 ha. The Netherlands has about 1400 private forest owners. Finally, tens of thousands of volunteers with a wide range of expertise make a vital contribution to nature conservation.

2.2 Problems with the realisation of our nature policy

We do encounter problems in our efforts to realise nature policy. The main conclusion in the Nature Assessment Bureau's reports is always the same, year after year: despite the modest rise in the total area of nature, the number of species and ecosystems in the Netherlands is still declining. Our Dutch landscape is becoming more and more uniform.

We can identify the following problems:

- With our current policy we are unable to realise the National Ecological Network of the quality required, in time. The spatial cohesion of the areas is limited, the links to water systems must be strengthened and the environmental quality of the Network is, and is likely to remain, a problem due to acidification, eutrophication and groundwater depletion. Realisation is under permanent pressure as a result of rising land prices. Moreover, now that the easy work has been done we must turn to the land that is more difficult to acquire. The network concept calls for linking zones between nature areas but in practice there are hardly any instruments, if at all to put create them. In addition, in the past the focus of the Government has been on quantity rather than quality.
- New housing developments, infrastructure and intensive, large-scale agricultural production have combined to make monotonous, cluttered landscapes. Landscapes are losing their identity, their visual openness. Relatively small interventions are enough to have an impact on a landscape's open character. The landscapes for which the Netherlands is internationally renowned – marshy grasslands, reclaimed land, seaclay polders – are at stake. Current nature policy has not been able to reverse trends for lack of uniformity in objectives, instruments and financial resources.
- The availability of and access to nature in people's immediate living environment continues to be a problem. This is especially true for people living in the big cities. Our nature policy has not succeeded in solving this problem. Again this is partly due to high land prices. Networks of green and blue around cities should be given more priority as they also help to bring recreational facilities within reach of city dwellers.
- The decline in global biodiversity is alarming and continues in spite of major efforts at the national and international level to preserve species and ecosystems. Tens of thousands of square kilometres of rainforest have been felled and over 10% of coral reefs (over 60,000 square kilometres) has been damaged beyond repair. As much as 25% of the species in some groups of mammals and plants are threatened with extinction. The genetic erosion in agriculture, forestry and fisheries continues: the number of species we use as food is declining. Although we can cite some positive accounts (sustainable forest management is one) we have not yet done enough to realise sustainable use and a fair division of the benefits arising from the utilisation of biodiversity, as agreed under the Biodiversity Convention.
- An evaluation of the current green policy documents shows that our approach to nature is very complicated and does not always have the envisaged effect at other levels of government. Too much remains policy on paper. In some cases objectives must be worked out more concretely. This applies to the North Sea, landscape policy and areas of our international nature policy.

2.3 Opportunities for nature

Present trends, some of which are beyond our power, may influence our broader nature policy in a positive way. That is, if we manage to respond to these trends at the right time. If we do not, some trends may threaten to undermine our objectives. We are, however, determined to take a positive, though realistic, approach and see the present developments as a challenge rather than a threat.

The population of the Netherlands is growing rapidly and our economy is booming. It is of paramount importance that we seek to develop a policy that makes adequate provision for development and economic growth whilst ensuring effective conservation of wildlife and the environment. Only then can we be ensured of a liveable and healthy country, for now and for generations to come, and fulfil our international responsibilities. But this does have consequences for how we approach spatial planning in our country and how we manage such vulnerable resources as water, land and biodiversity. Our affluent society is eminently placed (and should feel the obligation) to meet such demands and to link economic growth to the goal of a clean and attractive country. We should also prevent negative effects stemming from the growth of our economy on countries beyond our borders.

Socio-cultural developments – emancipation and individualisation, multi-culturalism and an ageing population – change the way we use the available space and lay more diverse demands on our surroundings. Growing prosperity combined with better education and shorter working weeks creates a greater desire for nature, both for recreational use and for people in search of peace and quiet. Peace, quiet and darkness are still relatively new concepts in terms of policy. Including them now might help us respond to a wider range of needs and create a more pluralistic living environment, and in doing so might broaden the base of support for actual nature policy. People themselves must be given a part in the shaping of their own living environment.

Peace, quiet and darkness, future policy themes

For many people nature is the one place where they can find peace and quiet. This was one of the conclusions of a study carried out in 1999 by *Bureau Intomart* at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. Nature gives people the peace in which they can find themselves. Not only in the daytime but also at night when the stars add an extra dimension to the peace and tranquillity all around. Plants and animals also benefit from a peaceful, quiet and dark night.

It is however quite difficult to find peace, quiet and darkness. One would think that nature areas are quiet places. The criterion here is that noise should not exceed 40dB(A). But the National Institute of Public Health and Environmental Protection has found that 30% of the areas in the National Ecological Network are not quiet enough. Without further measures to control noise pollution, this percentage will be more than 40 by 2030. Increasing illuminance from cities, the glasshouse industry and roads also takes its toll: if we do not act now the animals of the zodiac will, in large parts of the country, be the next endangered species.

Remarkably, the most valued feature that draws people to nature areas is the one least exploited in policy terms. Although environmental policy controls noise levels it does so mainly in areas where people live and work. Noise pollution in nature areas has not yet been a point of concern, although it should definitely be one if we want to provide people and animals with the peace and quiet they seek there. Our noise abatement policy should be more comprehensive in this respect. There should also be a policy that controls light pollution over nature areas. High night-time illuminance levels deteriorate the habitat of many flora and fauna, including meadow birds. Light pollution is more difficult to control than noise. The need for lighting should be weighed carefully against its impact on nature and landscape.

With the Fourth National Policy Document on Water Management, water management was put firmly on the agenda. The document deals with issues like rising sea levels, subsidence, salination, floods and groundwater depletion, all to some extent the consequence of a changing climate. New policy calls for a fundamental about-turn in how we tackle water-related problems, and indirectly presents new opportunities for nature and landscape management. Water must become a more prominent factor in spatial planning. In many cases, the resolution of water problems may be combined with strengthening the quality of nature and landscapes. Nature can also contribute to water management objectives, for instance, better quality of fresh water through natural purification.

Climate change has other dimensions as well. Gases like carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels are warming the planet. So-called carbon 'sinks', such as forests, soak up carbon dioxide and help alleviate the problem. The impact of rising temperatures on nature itself needs to be studied in more detail. Some urgency is required here, so that we can develop or adjust our policy in time.

In the rural areas, the transition to sustainable agricultural production will soften the traditional opposition of agriculture versus nature (agriculture is bad for nature and the environment, nature is bad for farming). This does not mean that the differences will vanish altogether: a marshland after all is not a cereal field. But as the harmonisation of agriculture and nature improves, the negative impact of agriculture on nearby nature areas will be reduced and the battle for hectares, defused.

All this presupposes a continuation of the process of making agriculture a clean and sustainably producing sector. Nature may help agriculture meet society's demands on the quality of food, production processes and attractive landscapes. This theme is also dealt with in the policy document Food Production and Rural Areas. Agriculture is primarily responsible for making the most of the new opportunities offered. A better use of the diversity in agricultural crops and varieties (which is part of agro-biodiversity) also contributes to a more nature-friendly, healthier and stronger agriculture.

These developments tie in with the growing role of environmental and nature considerations in European agricultural, rural development and fisheries policies. With Agenda 2000 and the introduction of cross-compliance, which links support payments to conservation, a first step has been made towards the integration of environmental and agricultural policies.

Agriculture is important but by no means the only player in the rural area. Cities, city dwellers who have moved to the countryside, private landowners, project developers, the resource industry (water, mineral extraction) and the recreation industry all make their mark on the rural area. It is a challenge to find ways of combining all these uses with nature and landscape for the benefit of society.

2.4 The results so far

On the basis of the above the Government concludes that nature policy is on the right track but that extra efforts are required for the realisation of its objectives and the full utilisation of opportunities. The efforts needed are described in the following chapters and in the Policy Programme.

The extra efforts can be summarised as follows:

- Work on the National Ecological Network must be continued full speed ahead, and certain components must be improved. In other words, we must keep on target and give more attention to the water links of the Network, and improve the Network's spatial cohesion and environmental quality.
- Work on the identity and quality of the landscape must be strengthened and the policy for urban green space networks must be worked out further. The emphasis here must be on multi-functional land-use and a development-driven landscape policy.
- Work on the conservation and wise use of biodiversity must be continued, both at the international and national level.

The Government believes this can only be achieved by broadening the scope of nature policy, by working in partnership with all parts of society, by increasing people's awareness of, understanding of, and personal commitment to, the natural heritage.

The Government wishes to simplify the policy system and introduce programmes which integrate objectives, measures and means and which explicate who is accountable for what. Concrete agreements with other levels of government and sectors will be made concerning the measures' realisation and envisaged trickle-down effects. This is in response to criticism on current Government policy.

A simpler and more transparent policy system is an important condition for a confident implementation of the new nature policy. Not least as it is the Government's ambition to broaden the base of support for its nature policy.

3. Ambitions for the 21st century

The Government's ambitions for the 21st century are by no means modest. Too much has been lost and there is so much to be gained.

The Government opts for a broader nature policy to do more justice to the significance of nature for society. This is in line with the recommendations laid down by the Council for the Rural Area in its paper *Natuurbeleid dat verder gaat*.

- Apart from its intrinsic value, nature also has amenity value and commodity value. In a crowded country such as ours these values should be recognised and developed without doing damage to nature's intrinsic value.
- Nature is not confined to the National Ecological Network but starts right at our doorstep.
- Nature is a responsibility of the whole of society and should have a broad base of support. But nature policy can only be broadened with the cooperation of local planning authorities, businesses and citizens.

Effective nature conservation cannot depend solely on national action. The Government attaches great importance to the various international obligations it has assumed and is determined to honour them. This also implies that we should encourage sustainable development and the international protection of vulnerable nature. Our national commitments are thus inextricably linked to our international commitments.

Our economic growth and prosperity should be reflected in the quality of our environment. Our affluent society is eminently placed (and should feel the obligation) to meet the growing demand for a better, cleaner and more attractive environment to live and work in.

The recommendations of the National Economic Development Council regarding spatial economic policy also highlight the fact that nature, landscape and cultural factors make an area attractive and encourage businesses to locate. These factors are becoming more and more important in business (re-) location decisions and thus directly contribute to the local economy.

Living and working in natural surroundings in the Netherlands: a luxury or good business sense?

Our country's economic prospects for the years ahead are good. Investments will be made in new business locations, housing and other provisions. This should be accompanied by an enhancement of our living and working environment and investments in nature. This is not just a luxury but an example of good business sense. Apart from being attractive, green surroundings have economic advantages as well:

- The quality of nature and landscape increasingly proves to be a selection criterion for private persons and businesses to locate; it is in fact the fastest growing selection factor.
- A house in green surroundings is generally worth 10 to 15% more than a similar house elsewhere.
- The economic significance of recreation and tourism is growing.

In short, simultaneous investment in houses, business locations and nature makes good economic sense, particularly in the long term. Obviously investments in such ecological assets have to be made first. This is no different from investing in capital assets. Nothing ventured, nothing gained applies here too.

Source: recommendations of the National Economic Development Council to the *Nota Ruimtelijk Economisch Beleid*

3.1 Making the transition

Given the broadening of our nature policy, the fact that four green policy documents are being integrated into one and the wish for a more simplified policy system, a different approach is required. In this document the policy areas nature, forest, landscape and biodiversity are no longer presented successively. Rather, they are all woven into five visions which shape the Government's new nature policy (see section 3.2).

Before presenting the five policy visions integrating nature, forest, landscape and biodiversity objectives, we briefly sketch the Government's intentions.

Nature: the continuation and further realisation of the National Ecological Network

The realisation of the National Ecological Network will be continued.

- The protection of areas coming under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive will be embedded in national legislation. Ways to further harmonise and simplify protection schemes are being studied.
- Agreements will be made with provincial authorities about which types of nature are to be realised and where.
- On account of continuing steep rises in land prices budgets for land acquisition again and again prove to be inadequate. The problem will be addressed.
- The spatial cohesion and functioning of the National Ecological Network will be strengthened, by adapting its delineation where necessary and connecting nature areas by green linking zones. Investments will be made to realise a limited number of major green arteries, robust nature links, which will lead to the expansion of some nature areas.
- The realisation of many nature policy objectives depends on stringent environmental conditions. The targets set for 2010, particularly those for acidification, eutrophication and groundwater depletion, will serve as a basis. Targets for the period beyond 2010 will be needed as the nature quality targets for 2018 are not likely to be met if the targets for 2010 only are followed. The further targets will be decided in the context of the Fourth National Environmental Policy Plan.
- Wet landscapes will be given additional consideration.
- As international obligations underlie much of our legislative framework for conservation, our species policy will remain an important part of our nature policy.
- The base of support for our nature policy will be broadened by increasing people's awareness of, understanding of, and personal commitment to, the natural heritage.

The National Ecological Network, to be improved, linked up and expanded

The 1999 *Natuurbalans* of the Nature Assessment Bureau shows that the spatial cohesion and environmental quality of the present National Ecological Network are inadequate. This problem will be addressed in various ways:

- The environmental quality of the National Ecological Network will be enhanced by generic and area-specific environmental and water management measures. The realisation and maintenance of a sound water management scheme is important here.
- Where possible, the fragmentation of habitats caused by motorways, railways and waterways must be corrected. Motorised traffic will be discouraged in nature areas.
- Where possible provincial authorities will designate new areas for the National Ecological Network in keeping with the objective of interlinked nature areas.
- The quality of the rest of the countryside will be enhanced by wildlife corridors and interlacing networks of green and blue. This will result in a landscape pattern of lines and planes.
- A limited number of so-called robust nature links will be created between larger core areas, i.e. areas and systems will be linked up and expanded at the same time. Where possible nature development will be combined with creating more space for water.
- A study will be carried out into the desirability of reviewing the delineation of the National Ecological Network to enable a more natural and sustainable water management, and into the desirability of changes in the nature objectives. Ways in which the qualitative functioning in core areas can be optimised will also be studied.

Landscape: strengthening the identity and quality of landscapes through development-driven strategy

The current landscape policy looks nice on paper but has not come off the ground. This is due to a lack of clarity regarding objectives, instruments and financial means. As spatial and landscape quality are a point of concern all over the Netherlands, the policy for landscape will now be strengthened along various lines.

- More attention will be paid to development-driven and design-driven landscape strategies. The quality of landscape must become an explicit factor in planning decisions and no longer be an afterthought.
- Spatial plans at every level of government must always undergo a qualitative assessment by independent experts. The national government's evaluations will be based on only a limited number of criteria. This approach will be worked out in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.
- Following the Belvedere Memorandum and in view of the conservation of areas listed as World Heritage Sites under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention a number of landscapes will be

placed in a priority protection scheme under the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.

- The development of an interlacing network of green and blue should brush up 400,000 ha of agrarian countryside. Farmers may take part in countryside stewardship schemes, under which they will be rewarded for creating and maintaining landscape elements. The Government will only lay down the framework for a green and blue network; the details are to be decided on at a lower level of government and may differ for each type of landscape. The results of this policy will be evaluated at the national level.

Forest: developing urban green space networks

Current forest policy - the long-term conservation of woodlands and the further expansion of forested area to more than 400,000 ha in 2020 - will be continued.

- In particular, policy to realise an additional 10,000 hectares of green space around the cities will raise the forested area beyond the targets laid down in the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. Furthermore, robust nature links will be created to connect important nature areas.
- Instead of creating additional woodland outside the National Ecological Network the Government's focus will now be on the creation of urban green space networks around the cities. This will give local and provincial authorities more flexibility to respond to people's wishes.
- The problem of continuing steep rises in land prices, which is delaying the development of additional woodland, will be addressed.
- Given the European context, the current national target for annual timber production is abandoned. However, the Government will ensure that, in at least 70% of our woodlands, sustainable timber production at levels similar to those of recent years will remain possible. The Netherlands sees timber as a sustainable and renewable resource. Domestic timber production is necessary, as we should not be entirely dependent on foreign production to meet national demand.

Biodiversity: an effective international nature policy

The Government attaches great importance to the obligations it has assumed under the Biodiversity Convention, is determined to honour them and to encourage other countries similarly to honour theirs. The Netherlands will:

- contribute to the conservation and strengthening of global biodiversity through the realisation of the National Ecological Network and the protection of species. Extra efforts will be made to preserve our characteristic wet landscapes.
- stimulate the sustainable utilisation of biodiversity. This implies that production processes should—more than they do now - be geared towards preserving and strengthening biodiversity. Biodiversity should also be utilised better in production processes (which may lead to a greater variety of food in the shops). The government will work with the sectors by directing sector policy and instruments towards a sustainable use of biodiversity.
- The third pillar of the Biodiversity Convention, that signatories must realise the fair share of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of biodiversity, has not yet been realised. There is no fair share of benefits at the international level. Further study into how this can be realised is required.

3.2 Five policy visions to give the Netherlands a more natural aspect

The Government's new nature policy intentions are worked out in detail in five interconnected visions.

Five visions of a more natural Netherlands in 2020

International: strengthening and harmonising our international nature policy.

The Grand Plan for Nature: the continuation and further strengthening of the National Ecological Network.

Water: making optimal use of opportunities for characteristic wet landscapes.

Rural Areas: strengthening the quality and identity of the rural areas through countryside stewardship and a better utilisation of biodiversity in production systems.

Urban Areas: realising urban green space networks in and around cities.

These five visions are presented in detail below. They reflect the government's ambitions for 2010 and beyond. Instruments to realise these ambitions are described in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 gives the spatial and financial consequences. In the second part of this document, the Policy Programme, we set out how exactly we intend to realise these visions through five policy strands:

- A strengthening of the National Ecological Network (more water, nature links, expansion)
- A strengthening of the identity and quality of landscapes (stronger, greener)
- A strengthening of the sustainable use and preservation of biodiversity (international, wise use of crucial resources).

The first vision: International

By 2020, the Netherlands' contribution to international nature policy will be substantial. It will have considerable influence in this field. First and foremost through effective nature management within our borders. But the often worrying state of nature and genetic resources will also require us to take action on a global scale. The Netherlands will actively participate in international nature policy processes and work with other countries to realise joint nature goals.

In 2010 the situation will be as follows.

- With internationally accepted criteria for biodiversity and agreements on targets and monitoring programmes in place, there will be no more room for a noncommittal attitude with respect to international biodiversity policy. Collateral agreements have been made about the size and quality of what constitutes nature of international significance such as forests, wetlands, sea and shores.
- The integration of biodiversity in economic sectors and instruments will have been strengthened. We will have become more aware of our impact on nature and the environment, both at home and abroad (our ecological footprint).
- The Netherlands will have earned a reputation in honouring its obligations. Our extra efforts with respect to wet landscapes and wetlands (see the vision on Water) will have increased the biodiversity within our borders and strengthened the identity of our landscapes.
- Thanks to the efforts of the Member States, the Netherlands included, nature and biodiversity will be important themes of European policy. Nature and biodiversity will also be integrated in sector policy and rural policy.
- Much effort will be put into the realisation of a European Ecological Network. The enlargement of the European Union will have increased multi-lateral cooperation and the total area of nature in the EU.
- The Netherlands will be a leading exporter of expertise in the area of nature and water management for sustainable development.

More space for water: life in the river delta

Our river landscape reflects our efforts over the centuries to control and use the rivers. It is partly man-made (defence lines, dikes, bridges, spillways, groynes), but the rivers themselves have also shaped the landscape (flood plain lobes, swales, levees).

With sedimentation and erosion increasing and sea levels rising, people have begun to realise that it is necessary to enlarge flood plains and broaden rivers to make our water systems more resilient, durable and safe. In the delta, effective water management is a matter of life and death. It is a challenge, not only for the Netherlands, but for all countries with major rivers.

Natural processes in river landscapes should be restored, here and across our borders. Water quality must be improved, migratory routes in and along rivers should be restored and nature reserves should be expanded to a viable size. The National Ecological Network needs to be strengthened, behind the dikes and on the floodplains. A smart combination of river broadening, sand and clay extraction and nature development would create ample opportunities to strengthen the biodiversity along our rivers.

The river broadening process is in full swing. Ideas about more natural floodplains, overflow areas where floodwaters can be stored until levels drop, and decisions to limit building on floodplains are being developed or actually carried out. Nature and safety go hand in hand here. Another challenge for our river landscape is to make our geomorphological, geological and cultural heritage visible, to preserve it and to develop it.

The second vision: The Grand Plan for Nature

By 2020 the Netherlands will have a coherent network of valuable nature areas, which will form the ecological and recreational backbone of the Netherlands. The scattered of nature areas of the latter half of the twentieth century will be integrated in an ecologically resilient network, where people will find peace, quiet, space and unspoilt nature. Already red deer will already be able to migrate unhindered from Oostvaardersplassen to the Veluwe national park and on to the Rhine; otters will be able to swim from Biesbosch to Lauwersmeer, with people from the Randstad urban network in their wake, in canoes or on their bikes, exploring the historic Water Defence Line. The National Ecological Network will link up with the European Ecological Network.

In 2010 the situation will be as follows.

- Work on the realisation of the National Ecological Network will be on target and due for completion in 2018. There will be concrete plans for the type and locations of nature to be developed. Sound agreements will have been made with provincial authorities and site managers with indications of who is responsible for what. The protection of the Network will be laid down in spatial plans at all levels of government. Areas within the boundaries of the National Ecological Network will be afforded a high degree of protection: any developments that may harm the network will be prohibited, even if they are proposed in areas which do not yet have a nature function.
- At critical locations, robust nature links will be in place or in development. These green arteries will enhance nature and landscapes (through preservation of characteristic landscape elements and heritage values) and improve recreational opportunities; they will connect and expand the area of nature in the Netherlands and contribute to an integral National Ecological Network. They will ensure the survival of species like bittern, otter and red deer, and bring nature closer to city dwellers. Where possible, developments in infrastructure, water management, working and living environments will be tied to investments in the development of green space.
- At a more local level, green space networks will also be integrated in spatial planning. There will be effective links between city parks and green areas on the urban fringe.
- Where possible, the fragmentation of habitats caused by motorways, railways and waterways will have been corrected. In core areas motorised traffic will be discouraged in favour of slow traffic.
- The overall quality of nature will have improved through an integrated approach to environmental pressures. Minerals management, water management and area-specific environmental measures in the vicinity of the National Ecological Network will have yielded positive effects.
- Besides its ecological function, the National Ecological Network will also be important for recreation and the preservation of our cultural heritage. Nature and woodland areas will also be used for timber production and water purification, and will be important sinks for carbon dioxide.
- We will be able to take pride in our National Parks. There will be several cross-border co-operative relationships within and between national parks.

Veluwe-Utrechtse Heuvelrug and surroundings

Although the Veluwe and Utrechtse Heuvelrug look like large contiguous woodlands on the map, they are in fact fragmented regions hemmed in by agrarian and urban surroundings. Motorways and railways cut through the areas, making it difficult and dangerous for animals to roam about freely. Many woodlands and open agricultural fields are fenced off. All in all, there is little opportunity for animals to migrate between the Veluwe and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. Nor do they have much chance of reaching the mineral-rich river basins, which for mammals such as roe deer and wild boar are important feeding areas.

The challenge is to develop the Veluwe - Utrechtse Heuvelrug and its surroundings as a whole, as a single coherent, valuable nature area. The integration of the Veluwe and the Utrechtse Heuvelrug with their surroundings will preserve and boost biodiversity in the larger region, and increase its recreational appeal, thus making a valuable contribution to the regional and national economy, too. To achieve all this, a robust nature link must be created between the Veluwe and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. Where possible, the fragmentation of habitats caused by motorways, railways and waterways must be corrected, and the passage to low-lying wet areas along the rivers Rhine, Kromme Rijn and IJssel must be improved. The success of this operation will depend on the intense involvement of many different actors.

The third vision: Water

The Dutch North Sea, lakes and rivers cover an area of some 6.5 million hectares and are a vital part of the National Ecological Network. The identity of the Dutch landscape and its characteristic biodiversity (such as wetlands) will be strengthened. The ecosystems of the sea, lakes and rivers in the low lands, and of characteristic streams in hillier areas will have become more natural. As a result, species such as otter, bittern, kingfisher, salmon and porpoise will have returned to former habitats. Water systems will have become more resilient while at the same time presenting new opportunities for the development of wet landscapes. Specific nature targets will have been developed for the North Sea, which take into account the interests of nature and humans. In 2010 the situation will be as follows.

- Along the major rivers, in the southern delta, the marshland areas and the large freshwater bodies in the centre of the Netherlands, nature development will be combined with improvements to the safety, durability and resilience of water systems. There will be more opportunities for aquatic recreation.
- Transition zones from fresh to salt water, from wet to dry landscapes, which are typical for a delta area, will be restored, starting with the Wadden Sea and Haringvliet.
- The Water Link between the Biesbosch and Lauwersmeer will have been realised for the most part. Rivers will make up essential and robust elements of the National Ecological Network.
- In the higher parts of the Netherlands, streams will be allowed to meander again. The restructuring of sandy soil areas, begun in 2000, in combination with agri-environment schemes will have restored stream valleys. There will be more water-storage capacity upstream, thus reducing flow peaks downstream. Nature, agriculture and recreation will go hand in hand in restored stream valleys.
- The Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie and the Stelling van Amsterdam, both internationally significant heritage sites, will again be clearly visible in the landscape, attracting thousands of tourists each year. Nature and water storage functions will be optimally realised and will accentuate the defence line in the landscape.
- The exploitation of the North Sea will be in equilibrium with its ecological function. Objectives and instruments for this part of the National Ecological Network will have been agreed by the authorities and sectors concerned, also at the international level. The coast will still be a popular destination for daytrips. The coastline will have become more robust, natural forces will be allowed more space without safety being compromised.
- The Wadden Sea will be a National Park. The close cooperation among the Wadden Sea nations and with other stakeholders will be strengthened.

The Water Link

Under international agreements we are obliged to preserve, restore and develop the nature and landscape that is characteristic of our country. Our wetlands are of international significance. They are the breeding ground for numerous bird populations, such as that of the bittern, whose usual habitat is elsewhere in northwestern Europe. For the long-term conservation of these wetlands, they must be embedded in a larger natural network of water bodies that spans the Netherlands and also connects with the European Ecological Network. First of all, the relatively large but isolated marshlands scattered over the low-lying areas in our country must be linked up to create the so-called Water Link. The Government will invest in this network of wet nature areas running from Lauwersmeer down to the Biesbosch to the Zeeland Delta. The Water Link heralds a new era in the long history of Dutch water management.

The Water Link is to be a trans-national link running from the Lauwersmeer area by way of the Randmeren, the peatlands in the west of the country and the Biesbosch to the Zeeland Delta. The major rivers running through the heart of the Netherlands are part of this Water Link. Next to the actual linking up of wet nature areas, the development of the Water Link also includes the strengthening and expansion of larger areas within the system. For example, the expansion of the marshlands in the Randmeren zone and the strengthening of the marshlands along the major rivers and in the western Delta region. There are still gaps at both ends of the Water Link: in Friesland and Groningen large areas of wet nature still stand on their own, and in the south the Krimpenerwaard does not link up with the Biesbosch. More work also needs to be done to complete the Water Link in the 'Blue Heart' in the centre of the Netherlands.

Investments in quality and in robust nature links between large marshland areas will greatly improve the spatial cohesion of wet landscapes in the National Ecological Network. Investments in the Water Link will also generally improve water management, provide us with new opportunities for recreation and tourism, and strengthen the identity of our landscape.

The fourth vision: Rural Areas

Our policy aims to reinforce the character and identity of the rural areas, so that landscapes again reflect their history (how they were shaped by wind, water, ice and man). Quality will have become a standard consideration in spatial planning, generating new, additional characteristics and combinations of functions which will certainly benefit the rural areas, the landscape and society. Agriculture will still be the most important determinant of the landscape, but the sector will be starting to accept its responsibility to improve both the spatial quality and environmental quality of the rural areas. In a densely populated country like ours, the rural area serves both as production area and amenity area on the urban fringe.

In 2010 the situation will be as follows.

- The effective conservation of wildlife and natural features can be compatible with economic growth and development provided planning decisions are based on sophisticated landscape design and result from comprehensive decision-making processes. New partnerships and smart combinations of functions will increase society's return from rural area investments.
- In many of our valuable man-made landscapes additional investments will have been made to create a lattice of landscape elements, naturally embanked water courses, small bogs and pools, wide verges, smaller woodland plots and paths. This interlacing network of green and blue will beautify the landscape and benefit many (protected) species of flora and fauna. In these areas nature and landscape will have opened up new possibilities for agriculture in the face of stringent nitrate policy, water management, consumer trends, and liberalised world trade. Here, extensive agricultural production will go hand in hand with nature, landscape management, water storage. The areas' geomorphological, geological and cultural heritage will be strengthened. Access to and within these areas will also have improved.
- The conservation of biodiversity will have become an important theme in national and European agricultural policy. The agricultural sector will now have a more prominent role as manager of the countryside. An attractive and accessible rural area will also help the sector obtain a cleaner and more natural image. A better utilisation of natural diversity will improve the sector's nature-friendliness and vitality.
- Dutch manure policy will have reduced manure production and nitrate levels in the soil, in surface water and groundwater. The policy will have served as a catalyst for the large-scale conversion of conventional agriculture to a more extensive and nature-friendly way of farming.
- In the struggle against groundwater depletion much will have been achieved, in part because of new ways of agricultural production. Other important factors will be the new agreements with water companies and the restructuring of sandy soil areas.
- Quality will be a crucial factor in planning decisions, and in rural areas only small-scale development will be allowed at the edge of villages. In many cases, ugly and often unused farm buildings will have been demolished. In the 'land for land approach' they will have been replaced by houses or small-scale enterprises.

Stream valleys

Sandy soil areas generally have a bad reputation when it comes to water and environmental quality. But these areas also have enormous natural potential provided they are soundly managed. This implies that the right amount of water of the right quality is in the right place at the right time. In short, we must work to improve the quality of our streams, not only the watercourses and embankments themselves, but the entire catchment area of the streams as well. The current management of our stream valleys is far from perfect. Channelling has accelerated the flow in most streams, causing lower groundwater levels over large areas which quickly result in water shortages for farmland in dry periods. And in urban areas downstream, high rainfall sooner leads to flooding. Finally, the water feeding our streams is often polluted.

Restoring the role of water management and ensuring healthy water systems with plentiful, good quality water available when desired will open up new opportunities for nature, agriculture and the recreation industry, and it will encourage businesses to locate. Restoration of the stream valley landscape requires the cooperation of local authorities, interest groups and the sectors concerned. The restructuring of the sandy soil areas is directed in particular at areas of intensive livestock farming, but the restoration of stream valleys may serve as a basis. The restructuring operation is further supported by area-specific environmental policy and the development of interlacing networks of green and blue.

The fifth vision: Urban Areas

Urban green space networks will link up city parks with larger green areas on the urban fringe and improve access to the countryside. Besides enhancing urban dwellers' quality of life, these networks will also improve opportunities for tourism and recreation in the countryside, thus boosting the rural economy. City dwellers will easily be able to escape the bustle of the city for a mid-week walk or bicycle ride in a peaceful and spacious setting close to home.

In 2010 the situation will be as follows.

- Urban green space networks will be a municipal responsibility. Municipal landscape planning will be pro-active and development-driven. For every new house or building an agreed amount of high quality green space will be planned in its vicinity. Water management measures, necessary in part due to the increase in hard landscaping, will be included in planning decisions.
- Development policy will stimulate high-density housing development combined with urban green space to prevent urban encroachment in rural areas.
- The creation of the urban green space network (as laid down in policy such as the Green Structure Plan for the Randstad) will be on target thanks to partnerships between government and industry (co-financing schemes).
- Private stakeholders will be allowed to participate in decision-making processes for green space in the vicinity of built-up areas. Water functions will be integrated where possible (sustainable water management in cities).
- Nature will be an important theme in urban planning and urban renewal. In their planning decisions municipal councils will respond to the wider range of needs of a multi-cultural society.
- Large infrastructure projects, once approved, will be designed to blend in with the urban landscape as much as possible. In this respect, urban planners will strive for more than mere compensation. The motto of the Council for the Rural Area, what must be done must be done right, applies here. Where possible, investments for nature, landscape and infrastructure will be combined (win-win situation).
- The design of new neighbourhoods or areas will take into account the needs of species that rely on the urban area for their habitat such as the swift. This also applies, for example, to the barn owl in the rural area. The ecological value of urban green space should be raised, so that city children may again find newts and sticklebacks in the ditch close by.

The Delta metropolis: a formidable challenge

The aldermen of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht responsible for physical planning recently presented the Delta metropolis concept. The Delta metropolis stands for the growth, dynamics and synergy of the four components that make up the spatial system: water, man-made landscapes, urban interaction and a network of connections.

The Delta metropolis is depicted as a ring-shaped traffic artery connecting the cities that make up the Randstad urban network. The smaller cities are all accessible via the nodes in the network. The nodes themselves are the basis for new residential areas or new employment opportunities. The development of an interlacing network of green and blue will make the Delta metropolis a more attractive area to live and work in, and take the pressure off other areas in the Netherlands. Quality, diversity and sustainability of the urban green space are important if city people are to find the peace, quiet and beauty they need there.

A pro-active landscape policy and creative design solutions are necessary to realise the ambitions of the Delta metropolis. This document *Nature for People, People for Nature* contributes by giving attention to city dwellers' wishes for the urban green space (Urban Nature), by presenting robust nature links such as the Water Link which runs through the Delta metropolis and by supporting an ambitious landscape strategy with creative, quality-oriented designs.

4. Implementation: nature at the heart of society

An effective implementation of policy is needed to realise the ambitions laid down in the five policy visions.

4.1 Principles for an effective implementation of policy

The Government opts for a broader nature policy to do more justice to the significance of nature for society. This broader policy requires the internalisation of our nature policy (or rather the interests of nature). Nature must be positioned at the heart of society. It must be enshrined in people's hearts. It must be reflected in the decisions of individual people, entrepreneurs, groups in society and local authorities. This is important as the deterioration of nature is often caused by human activity. Nature policy should therefore make an effort to mobilise people's commitment to and responsibility for nature at all levels of society.

Our current nature policy primarily consists of the acquisition, development and management of land, and has literally put the National Ecological Network on the map. Our current approach is an effective one and will be continued, but it is not sufficient for a dynamic and densely populated country such as the Netherlands, where many decisions bear directly or indirectly on the quality of nature and landscape.

Moreover, the creation of the National Ecological Network and a protection scheme for the land within its boundaries are important, but they are not enough. The land outside its boundaries also needs a booster. In addition to protection, development and design are important pillars of the broader quality-oriented approach.

A double-barrelled approach is needed: nature should form an integral part of other developments (win-win situation), and the framework assigned from the top down should offer sufficient scope for input from the bottom up. This principle forms the basis of this document *Nature for People, People for Nature* and stresses the fact that the responsibility for making the Netherlands a greener and more beautiful country lies not only with government but also with individual people, entrepreneurs and groups in society.

The above presupposes that the interests of nature are explicitly considered in decision-making processes, that the relevant knowledge is widely available and accessible and that the relevant instruments have a positive effect, particularly where incentives are concerned.

Nature policy will therefore be renewed and strengthened on the following points:

- Partnerships: strengthening target-oriented partnerships on the basis of clear targets and agreements.
- Integration: Nature policy objectives should be taken into account in all other policy areas (eg. environment, water, spatial planning).
- Harmonisation: instruments should be harmonised, broadened and used more intensively.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

4.2 Partnerships

Target-oriented partnerships should be strengthened and the Government wants to support this. This must be done on the basis of a clear division of responsibilities between government and other stakeholders. The Government believes that responsibility for the protection and strengthening of nature and landscape primarily lies with the bodies directing society's activities for nature and landscape. Businesses are primarily responsible for the adoption of production processes that ensure the sustainable use of nature and landscape. The Government recognises that nature organisations and volunteers make a vital contribution to nature conservation and play an important part in increasing people's awareness of our natural heritage.

The Government supports target-oriented partnerships with an area-specific, integrated approach, more co-financing of nature policy, and clear and accountable administrative agreements.

Provincial, municipal and water authorities must develop integrated policy for the environment, water, spatial planning, nature and landscape. An area-specific approach raises the return of investments and

ensures that vulnerable areas are protected by buffer zones. The Government will contribute to this by allocating integral budgets and encouraging regional collaboration.

The Government will seek private investors to co-finance nature policy, and stimulate an integral planning approach (which combines red and green) for housing and business development. In addition, tax measures will improve the financial position of site managers (greening the tax system). Administrative agreements will be made with the provincial authorities on the implementation of rural policy. These agreements will include a joint framework for the development of nature policy, which is to serve as a basis for the implementation of nature policy in the regions. The Government will also make agreements with businesses and other groups in society about their contribution to the realisation of nature policy objectives. A point of special consideration will be the contribution of businesses to the obligations the Government has assumed under the Biodiversity Convention (production processes should be geared towards safeguarding the sustainable use of nature and landscape).

4.3 The integration of nature policy objectives in other policy areas

To increase the effectiveness of nature policy, nature conservation objectives should be considered explicitly in all other policy fields. The integration of policies for the environment, water and spatial planning is particularly important as these policies create the necessary pre-conditions for healthy ecological systems. International and national sector policies for agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, housing and development cooperation should also be integrated. Integration is a major requirement under the Biodiversity Convention.

Integration is also sought in other policy areas. Water and cultural heritage, for instance, have been given a place in the policy presented in this document (wet landscapes, robust nature links and interlacing networks of green and blue).

The environment and water

Nature targets for a given area can only be realised by ensuring that environmental and water conditions meet certain standards. At this time, however, conditions are below standard in many areas. The present requirements laid down in the Third National Environment Policy Plan will not lead to the achievement of targets set for 2020 and 2030, certainly where acidification and groundwater depletion are concerned. To combat these problems, coherent area-specific policy is necessary. As long as such policy is not in place, we need the restoration measures under the Forest and Nature Survival Plan to ensure the survival of some vulnerable species.

In many cases, water and nature can be combined in a comprehensive water management policy. The combination of uses may result in solutions that are highly beneficial to society. In water supply schemes, water extraction can also be combined with measures that improve the quality of nature and the landscape, which is in line with the Fourth National Policy Document on Water Management.

Open spaces

The spatial protection of nature and landscape is regulated in a very complicated manner and has not had the envisaged effect. To improve the trickle-down effect of national policy, regulations should be simplified and become more transparent. All this however within the constraints of our international obligations under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.

The Nature Conservation Act protects the areas designated in the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, in accordance with recent agreements on the implementation of the Birds Directive (Letter to the Lower House, session 1999-2000, 26 800 no. 86). Next, the Government is looking into ways to simplify and harmonise measures to protect the remaining areas under the Forest Act and in the National Ecological Network. Ways to improve the measures' realisation and envisaged trickle-down effects will also be studied.

The quality of nature and landscape will be further improved by:

- Giving more weight to the quality of landscape design in all planning activities.
- Where possible, letting the ambition to improve landscape quality guide planning and decision-making.
- Adjusting policy-making and decision-making processes so as to safeguard the quality of landscape design.

These steps will be worked out in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. The Government's main goals are to develop requirements for the planning and decision-making processes, and substantive quality criteria to evaluate provincial planning proposals.

This approach is in line with the recommendations laid down by the Council for the Rural Area in its paper *Geleid door kwaliteit*, where landscape is seen as the basis for a more design and development driven planning approach. The Dutch countryside is not preserved rigidly, since landscape dynamics ensure that there will always be opportunities for development. Integral win-win solutions are preferred.

Provincial and municipal authorities will also have to evaluate the quality of spatial plans on the basis of existing or new landscape plans. This might be done by an independent team of experts (comparable to the present Amenities Committee) to ensure a democratic decision-making process. The same principles should apply to national plans, such as for infrastructure, which may affect the quality of nature and landscape. The Government is responsible for the assessment of these plans, but will seek consultation with the provincial governments concerned.

In the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas a number of valuable landscapes of national or international significance will be designated for priority protection.

The quality of nature and landscape

In this document, the concept quality of nature and landscape comprises:

- The quality of nature reserves.
- The nature values of the agrarian countryside (biodiversity).
- The rural area as a reservoir of natural resources (space, water, environment, quiet and darkness).
- The rural experience (access, recreation).
- Its commodity value for sustainable activities like agriculture.
- The proper scale and dimension of the landscape (intimacy vs openness).
- The history of the landscape (its geomorphological, geological and cultural heritage).
- Architectural and design qualities.

The integration of biodiversity and sector policy

The Government will make its sector policy and associated instruments more environment-friendly, as recommended by the OESO, to further sustainable enterprise. It will do so by integrating nature in the working programmes of the various international organisations (including FAO, World Bank, WTO and UNCTAD). At the European level, the government will push for a greener policy for agriculture and fisheries. The Government will make sure that nature is integrated in sector plans for housing, resource extraction, and transportation). Empirical targets will be set and progress will be monitored.

Agriculture and Fisheries

Socially responsible enterprise is a key issue within the agricultural sector. Increasingly, the licence to produce is linked to the sustainable management of our natural resources (space, valuable landscapes, biodiversity, and water). In order to obtain such a licence the sector will have to ensure that the interests of nature, landscape and biodiversity are visibly adopted in agricultural practice. This is in line with European agricultural policy and it is also the theme of the policy document Food Production and Rural Areas. The Government supports this development with countryside stewardship schemes, under which individual people (mostly farmers) will be rewarded for their activities to enhance the landscape. Interlacing networks of green and blue will only be created in areas with special landscape, nature or heritage values. As their creation will in part be publicly funded, the Government will lay down a number of quality criteria (with respect to spatial cohesion, robustness, accessibility and the extent to which the areas are characteristic).

Integrated fish stock management is a key issue for the implementation of the environmental aspects in sea fisheries, coastal fisheries and inland fisheries. The sector itself is responsible for the integration of nature objectives in their fisheries and management plans. In European fisheries policy a start has already been made with the further integration of environmental objectives. The consultations in preparation of the sixth Environmental Action Programme and the common fisheries policy reforms offer the best opportunity to steer a more ecological course in fisheries policy.

Housing and business locations

Investments in housing and business locations will increasingly be linked to investments in nature development. A study will be made into how and to what extent this can be done. This is part of an integrated planning approach that is aimed at the creation of an attractive living and working environment. The Government will negotiate with regional authorities and businesses about how this aspect of policy could be achieved.

Infrastructure

Investments in new infrastructure will be based on careful planning and high quality landscape designs. In the early stages of the planning process interests will be weighed carefully and where necessary values will be integrated or compensated for in accordance with the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.

The Government will improve the effectiveness of projects to restore fragmented nature areas or habitats. Where benefits may be realised simultaneously for infrastructure and green links, the Government will combine investments for nature, landscape and infrastructure (win-win situation). Provincial authorities will be asked to do likewise.

Grey-green junctions: crossing instead of intersecting

Motorways, railways or waterways cutting through the National Ecological Network often result in the fragmentation of habitats, which threatens the survival of many vulnerable species. For a proper functioning of the National Ecological Network these obstacles should, where possible, be removed. Defragmentation should be applied strategically for maximum effect. In places where the National Ecological Network is already firmly established. In some places other, more comprehensive measures may also be necessary. The robust nature links form the main arteries within the National Ecological Network. Where these links are crossed by infrastructure (so-called grey-green junctions) defragmentation measures will have the greatest effect. Combined grey and green investments can generate win-win situations and optimise the effect of measures to correct fragmentation. Especially when an integral design-driven planning approach is followed.

In the years ahead, pilot projects with design-driven and development-driven planning will be carried out for a number of grey-green junctions in order to gain experience with this planning approach and to fine-tune the approach for the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. The pilot projects will be carried out for two grey-green junctions in the robust nature link joining the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and the Veluwe:

- The junction of the A12/HST-Oost, the National Ecological Network corridor to the river flood plains, and the robust nature link;
- The junction of the A1/railway (Veluwe-Utrechtse Heuvelrug), the National Ecological Network and the robust nature link.

Pilot projects are also being considered for junctions on the Water Link.

4.4 Strengthening policy instruments

A proper implementation of the new nature policy not only requires the integration of nature in other policy areas but also more effective policy instruments. The harmonisation and improvement of sector policy instruments will be continued.

The Government wishes to harmonise the spatial protection of our nature and woodland areas and improve the effectiveness of protection instruments. The current situation is confusing, as different protection schemes are in use simultaneously, sometimes even for the same areas. In other cases, protection schemes do not differ but their effects vary from one area to another. This situation must change.

- The protection of areas under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives will be worked out and laid down in national law (Nature Conservation Act).
- The protection of the remaining areas under the Forest Act or the National Ecological Network will be studied. The areas will either come under an identical scheme or they will be put under a priority protection scheme under the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning.
- A study will be made to decide whether the precautionary principle should apply to these other areas as it does to the areas under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.

For the protection of areas under the Forest Act or the National Ecological Network the decisive criterion must be that the protection scheme is clear, effective and transparent. Nor must the new protection scheme hinder new developments. The Government's decision regarding a new scheme will be based on suggestions put forward by the Ministries as well as proper consultation.

The harmonisation of sector policy instruments is also important for area-specific environmental policy. A number of existing instruments have been put together in the *Stimuleringsregeling Gebiedsgericht Beleid 2000*, an aid scheme to promote area-specific policy. In some areas resources for nature and landscape policy can be combined.

The Government will also repeal the Land Development Act and introduce the Act for the Development of the Rural Area to promote an integrated and area-specific approach for the rural area. Tailor-made solutions and speed are the key words here.

In urban networks the framework act on administrative renewal, the *Kaderwet Bestuur in Verandering*, may help to put in place instruments for regional cooperation to further a more integrated approach to urbanisation, traffic and transport, nature and water.

For the time being, i.e. until the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas is passed by Parliament, the intensification of our nature policy is realised with the instruments now in place.

A more design and development driven planning policy is to be realised by lending more weight to design and development in planning and decision-making procedures and strengthening the position of integrated regional design. The Government supports this with an additional financial incentive. The Government also supports four design exercises (études) to find out how such an approach can be used to best effect in the context of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. Delegating the task of design to regional levels means that the national government will restrict its role to laying down selected substantive and process criteria. The Government will also demonstrate the integral approach in pilot projects for grey-green junctions and combined water-nature management.

The broader nature policy must also be reflected in research, extension and education. Environmental education will receive strong consideration as it helps create a broader base of support and fuels the public debate on nature policy. A study will be carried out into ways to improve the effectiveness of the knowledge infrastructure for nature and make it more accessible.

4.5 Monitoring and evaluation

The Government aims to set frameworks rather than detailed regulations. Qualitative and quantitative targets are set or, where this has not yet happened, agreements are in place to do so. This is the case with the international biodiversity policy, for instance, where an adequate system of international monitoring and evaluation is to be set up.

The Government will evaluate the new policy's progress annually on the basis of *Natuurbalans*, the Nature Management Outlook, published by the Nature Assessment Bureau. As of 2001 *Natuurbalans* will contain progress indicators and publish the policy's results. The financial statements of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries will also show what progress was made.

In four years time the document will be reviewed to find out whether amendments are necessary. The four-yearly *Natuurverkenning* of the Nature Assessment Bureau will serve as a basis.

5. Financial and spatial consequences

The ambitions to give the Netherlands a more natural aspect in 2020 are worked out in five policy strands. Decisions about the extra financial resources needed for this new policy were made in the spring of 2000. The Netherlands Budget Memorandum for 2001 will give details about where the extra money will come from (needed for the extra quality input, the robust nature links and the promotion of a more design and development driven planning policy). The Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas are the legal frameworks within which integrated planning decisions are to be taken.

5.1 Financial consequences

Most of the budget for nature is spent on the realisation of the National Ecological Network. Part of the extra incentive set aside for nature four years ago, when the present Government came into office, was for meeting the costs of rising land prices, the creation of wet landscapes and the funding of agri-environment schemes. On top of that the Government invested in the restructuring of the sandy soil areas in the south and east of the Netherlands, which will also improve the overall quality of nature and landscape. An amount of three thousand million was earmarked for nature to cover the period to 2010 (in addition to the two thousand million from the Ministry of Transport for infrastructural adaptations).

The problem of rising land prices continues to be a point of concern. In the autumn of 1999 an extra 50 million was budgeted for land acquisition and, as of 2000, a structural 80 million is added to the budget for land acquisition. The average land prices of 1999 now serve as a basis for the budget for land acquisition for the realisation of the National Ecological Network.

Policy will be intensified in the following areas:

- The realisation of a number of robust nature links to connect large nature areas. Funding will be released for the acquisition and development of the first segment of 13,000 hectares, as set out elsewhere in this document. The Government will first concentrate on the Water Link and the Veluwe-Utrechtse Heuvelrug.
- The planned quality input (the interlacing network of green and blue) for areas with high landscape, cultural historical and nature values. Where possible the landscape management in these areas will be combined with water management (water retention and storage). Funding will be released for the development of the first segment of 20,000 hectares, including the acquisition of 5,000 ha as set out elsewhere in this document. A total of 200,000 hectares of agrarian countryside can be improved in this way.
- The encouragement of good landscape development plans and landscape design in the context of more design and development driven planning approach.

The Government has given the assurance that funds will be made available to manage the robust nature links and the interlacing networks of green and blue. To enhance the quality of the National Ecological Network areas need to be linked up and expanded, and the quality of landscape and nature in the adjacent agrarian countryside must be improved. To stop the further deterioration of the landscape, areas outside the National Ecological Network should also benefit from the exercise. The creation of an interlacing network of green and blue and better landscape development plans and landscape design will help here.

The creation of robust nature links and an interlacing network of green and blue will not just benefit ecosystems and landscapes. Recreation and our cultural heritage will also profit. Where possible, links will be made with water management, infrastructural improvements and developments in farming. In 2001 an additional 50 million guilders will be available for these components, an amount which will be doubled from 2002. The extra money will help implementers make a start with strengthening the National Ecological Network and the Dutch landscape in a broader context. The funding required for the realisation of the National Ecological Network is of course covered by existing policy.

A budget of incentives has been reserved to realise the objectives laid down in this policy document. The first segment of 13,000 hectares, out of a total of 27,000 hectares needed for the robust nature links, will be designated in the context of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. Decisions on the 200,000 hectares of landscape that will be

improved (i.e. the 20,000 hectares qualifying for new development and 5,000 hectares for acquisition) will also be taken then. A temporary incentive programme will make 50 million available for the period 2001-2006 to encourage a design oriented landscape approach. An approximate amount of 2 thousand million has been reserved for the period up to 2020 to realise these components.

In addition to this intensified approach investments in housing and business locations will be combined with the creation of new green space in the direct vicinity of towns and cities, and in the construction of a network of walking and cycling paths from the built-up areas to the new nature areas. The new green areas will be created by changing land use on an envisaged 10,000 hectares of land over the period 2010-2020 (i.e. on top of the targets laid down in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas).

For the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas a study will be made into the possibilities of combining red and green development and the extent to which green can be financed by red. This ties in with the current debate on land policy. The Government will announce its relevant views with the publication of part 1 of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning.

For new infrastructure the Government will opt for careful planning and high quality landscape design. In the context of the National Traffic and Transport Plan ways will be sought to adopt a more area-specific and total design approach. Where infrastructure cuts through green links good solutions must be found. This is also in line with the third memorandum on architecture. Where infrastructural investments coincide with investments in nature (robust nature links and the extra landscape quality input) a joint approach should be adopted to achieve maximum results. A more integrated approach will be worked out for some grey-green junctions in pilot projects. These projects will show whether current budgets are adequate for a good landscape design and what the advantages are of a combined realisation of grey and green (win-win situation).

The debate about creating space for water will take place in the context of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the recommendations given by the Committee for Water Management in the 21st Century. Links with the envisaged water management will be made where possible. As for the wet landscapes and safety aspects in the river areas we would refer to the agreements made recently (Letter to the Lower House (session 1999-2000, 25 017, no 25). The Government will continue to strive for a joint development of water and nature in line with a high quality spatial planning policy.

These are all long-term aims. Many ambitions need to be worked out further in the planned policy documents, the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas, and in the context of the ICES debate.

Initially, efforts with respect to the robust nature links and the interlacing network of green and blue will be concentrated on a substantial interim target. Unless the Government decides otherwise in the future, the other spatial ambitions will probably not be realised until after 2018 given the funding available at present.

5.2 Spatial consequences

The spatial cohesion of the National Ecological Network will primarily be improved by enhancing the quality of existing green areas rather than more land acquisition. In most cases zoning changes will be a last resort (especially for the creation of robust nature links and urban green space networks). Some 50,000 hectares will be necessary to raise the Network to the desired standard of quality. With the emphasis on multiple land use, the claim for more land to realise the new nature policy will be quite modest.

The ultimate ambition is to improve the quality of valuable man-made landscapes and safeguard their sustainable management. This will involve some 400,000 hectares, which will be designated under the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. Acquisition or zoning changes are planned for no more than 10,000 hectares of the total of 40,000 ha that will be re-developed. The interlacing network of green and blue will take up a total of 40,000 hectares while enhancing the quality of 400,000 hectares of landscape. As mentioned earlier, this document calls for the realisation of a first segment of 200,000 ha, i.e. 20,000 hectares will be designated for re-development, 5,000 hectares of which will be purchased.

In addition an extra 10,000 hectares of land will be needed for the creation of urban green space networks in combination with new building projects. High quality landscape design will have a positive effect on a much larger area (100,000 ha).

The realisation of robust nature links, described in this document, will involve a number of large-scale projects, which will be worked out under the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. For the realisation of all the robust nature links as proposed in this document zoning changes will be needed for a maximum 27,000 hectares of land. Public-private partnerships are to be set up to realise and fund these projects. This document sets out the realisation of a first segment of 13,000 hectares of robust nature links.

A target of approximately 10,000 ha has been set for wet landscapes (which includes the 3,000 to 4,000 hectares of extra nature released under the former Government to increase safety in the river areas), which will be formally laid down in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning. It is estimated that roughly half of the nature development projects will involve extra quality input in existing nature areas, the funding for which has already been approved.

Policy Programme

1. Target-oriented cooperation

The task of making the Netherlands a greener and more beautiful country is not only the responsibility of the Dutch Government. Conservation organisations and individual citizens also have a part to play. The involvement of both professional conservation organisations and volunteer groups is on the increase. The Government welcomes this trend and would like to see it grow further. It therefore invites the other parties to take the initiative in the actual implementation of this policy. We feel that administrative frameworks imposed from above must allow scope for policy to be fleshed out from below.

The Government aims to strengthen the public's involvement in nature by investing in target-oriented cooperation for all parties involved in implementing nature policy. The first requirement is a clear division of tasks between the parties. Section 1.1. outlines the Government's standpoint. Section 1.2. describes how target-oriented cooperation can be stimulated. It emphasises the importance of regional initiatives, of increasing the parties' financial stake in nature, and the importance of making clear agreements.

1.1 Clear division of tasks

Nature is a common resource and its care is the joint responsibility of public authorities, the private sector, conservation organisations and the public. Each group operates from a specific standpoint and responsibility. The Government distinguishes the following roles and responsibilities.

Public authorities

The different levels of Government work together to develop and implement nature policy. A framework is developed at the national level which is filled in and implemented by local and provincial authorities.

In the autumn of 1999, the national and provincial governments agreed the main points of policy for rural areas. This is set out in the management model for the rural area (see box) that also forms the basis for the execution and planning of nature policy. In essence it means that the national and provincial governments enter into management agreements on the policy aims and measures for rural areas. Each province then draws up four-yearly implementation programmes, and the Government funds these programmes on the basis of implementation contracts.

Local authorities can then draw up local policy within national and provincial frameworks. There are several instruments covering landscape and nature, spatial planning and the environment, which enable local government to make a valuable contribution to broader nature policy.

Management model for the rural area

The national and provincial governments have agreed the following approach to management of rural areas.

- The Government lays down a policy framework and does not become involved with project management.
- The provincial government oversees projects to ensure they reflect policy by concentrating on planning and programming.
- The provincial government is accountable to the Government with respect to the agreed management targets.
- The Government Service for Land and Water Management (*DLG*) implements Government regulations, for which it receives national funds via the *Groenfonds*. *DLG/Laser* allocate funds in compliance with Government regulations, provincial implementation programmes and management agreements.

In real terms this means:

- The Government and the Provinces enter into a framework management agreement laying down the targets and means available for each Province.
- Each provincial government, in consultation with other parties, drafts multi-year plans for specific areas and clusters these area-specific plans into four-yearly provincial implementation programmes. The Provinces are responsible for designating these areas on the basis of certain set criteria. The implementation programmes must include concrete, verifiable targets for these areas and indicate what funding will be required and which Government regulations are being implemented. They must also state the amount of provincial funding and the amount of third-party funding required. The implementation programmes can be revised each year.
- For each implementation programme, there is an implementation contract between the national and provincial governments, detailing the concrete targets and funding from Government, Province and third parties. The contract normally runs for a period of four years, although interim revisions can be made in exceptional cases. The contract applies only to agreements between the Government and the Province. For agreements with other parties an area-specific contract can be entered into.
- Implementation is financed by national measures and realised by provincial implementation programmes.
- Management contracts should also include provisions on monitoring and accountability. The provincial governments must produce annual management reports reflecting the policy aspects of implementation. *DLG* and *Laser* will carry out audits with respect to received subsidies.
- If necessary, plans and implementation programmes may be revised by mutual agreement. The management agreement will then also need to be revised, so that *DLG/Laser* can take these changes into account.

On the basis of the management model for the rural area, the following division of responsibility applies:

Division of responsibilities in the public sector

Government

- Establish a national nature policy framework.
- Protect and strengthen national and international nature and landscapes.
- Realise a National Ecological Network: greater part of funding; preserve and develop diversity, monitor national targets for nature types.
- Ensure that adequate instruments are in place to implement nature policy.
- Ensure that an adequate knowledge system is in place.
- Ensure that national nature policy is embedded at lower levels of government, for example in management agreements with provincial authorities.

Provincial authorities

- Lay down the provincial spatial planning policy for the protection and strengthening of nature and landscape.
- Realise the National Ecological Network: designate areas and indicate, in consultation with site managers, where the different types of nature are to be realised.
- Direct area-specific nature and landscape policy, and stimulate regional cooperation and integral implementation of policy.
- Ensure that national and provincial nature policy trickles down to lower levels by drafting agreements with the local authorities concerned.

Local authorities

- Adopt and enforce national nature policy.
- Ensure that quality of nature and landscape is sufficiently considered in spatial plans.
- Encourage community participation in local policy-making processes.
- Ensure that high-quality nature is available locally.

Water authorities

- Care for the quality and quantity of surface water.
- Integral water management geared to nature development.
- Secure strategic water supplies.

The private sector

The Government believes that sustainable enterprise is primarily the responsibility of business. Nature and environmental policy lays down a number of preconditions for private enterprise, but the Government expects businesses to make additional investments in nature and landscape in their direct surroundings. In this way, businesses will also contribute to the development of high-quality business locations. Certainly for a service-based economy like the Netherlands', attractive natural surroundings are becoming an increasingly crucial factor in attracting and keeping businesses.

The Government feels that economic sectors also have a social responsibility regarding nature and landscape. It therefore proposes to hold special consultations and make agreements with sectors on the implementation of nature policy; initially with sectors involved in activities which affect nature and landscape and which often also profit from nature and landscape. The Government hopes that the sector agreements will lead to a more transparent and target-oriented approach to nature and landscape quality.

The private sector's responsibility for nature

Agriculture

- Maintain a good standard of green space in the whole of the rural area, as part of good agricultural practice.
- Inform consumers about the nature aspects of products (certification).
- Sustainable utilisation and exploitation of agri-biodiversity.

Fisheries

- Integration of nature and environmental concerns in fisheries (integrated fish stock management).
- Inform consumers about nature aspects of products (certification).

Mining and water extraction

- Extraction of raw materials to be carried out under ecological preconditions.
- Tie investment in development and management of nature and landscape to raw material extraction (nature-inclusive planning).

Construction (including housing and infrastructure)

- Integral development approach (red *and* green).
- Further develop the sustainable building concept (to include biodiversity, ecological water and landscape characteristics, the quality of the building design).

Recreation and tourism

- Invest in green facilities, increase recreational appeal and accessibility of nature close to home.
- Stimulate sustainable utilisation of nature and landscape for recreational purposes (in the Netherlands and abroad).

Site managers

Site managers play a crucial role in the conservation and development of nature, in opening nature areas for recreation and in increasing support for nature policy. There are many different types of site manager, from individual farmers for whom nature management is a secondary activity, to large organisations whose main task is nature management.

The Government wishes the continued involvement of all these types of site managers in nature management. In practice, site size, objectives and managers' expertise determine the type of management for a given area. The Government assumes the following division of responsibility, but this does not mean that certain types of managers are restricted to only one type of management.

Responsibility of site managers

Individual farmers and stewardship cooperatives

- Agricultural nature management, species protection (notably meadow bird conservation), construction and management of landscape elements.

Private forest and estate owners, forestry groups

- Management of multi-functional woodland and estates; also forestry management geared to outstanding nature value, agricultural nature management and nature development.

Local authorities and recreation boards

- Multi-functional management, with special attention to recreation.

Private nature conservation organisations

- Management of larger, connected sites and sites which require specific know-how of rare nature values; estate management.

National Forest Service

- The same responsibilities as other nature conservation organisations. In addition, management of extensive areas of multi-functional woodland with special attention to recreation in densely populated areas. Also serves as the Government's safety net for nature and landscape management.

Department of Public Works and Water Management, water supply companies and water boards

- Nature management in keeping with the primary function of the sites, plus the whole range of nature functions within this framework.

Ministry of Defence

- Site management based on the military function of the sites, plus the whole range of nature functions and outdoor recreation within this framework.

Other partners in nature management

In addition to governments, sectors and site managers, numerous other organisations and volunteers are actively involved in nature and landscape. For example, *Boschap* (woodlands), The World Wildlife Fund for Nature, the Dutch Society for the Preservation of Birds (birds), *Stichting Natuur en Milieu* (nature and environment), landscape conservation groups, species protection and data collecting groups and groups concerned with nature and environmental education. These organisations often rely heavily on volunteers. The Dutch automobile association ANWB and agricultural organisations also make their own special contribution. The Government sees the increasing efforts of all these organisations as a sign of the growing appreciation for nature and regards them as important partners in the execution and promotion of its policy.

1.2 Investing in target-oriented cooperation

In implementing nature policy the Government will take a three-pronged approach to investment in target-oriented cooperation.

- Clear agreements
- Area-specific approach
- Broader funding of nature policy implementation

Clear agreements

Target-oriented cooperation requires clear agreements to be made, to which the parties can hold each other responsible. These must be verifiable and accountable.

- The Government and Provinces will enter into management agreements on the implementation of nature policy. These agreements will form the basis of contracts with other authorities, managers and relevant parties. The policy contained in this Memorandum will be incorporated into the next amendment to the management agreements, which will be directed at the implementation programme for 2002.
- The Government will develop procedures for establishing covenants with the private sector on its contribution to policy implementation. The covenants will be outline agreements, allowing scope for area-specific objectives and targets. The Government would like to establish covenants with agriculture, fisheries, mining, construction and recreation and tourism.
- The Government will intensify its consultations with other levels of government and stakeholders. It will look into the extent to which the inter-governmental consultation "*Vitalisering Platteland*" (regeneration of rural areas) can play a role in aiding policy implementation. The Government will

also study which points in the *Landelijk Overleg Groene Ruimte* (national consultation on rural areas) can be strengthened.

Area-specific approach

A regional integral approach will strengthen nature and landscape policy considerably. The Government would like to stimulate area-specific cooperation by combining or integrating implementation schemes. In addition, the Government would like to stimulate design and development driven landscape strategies that integrate red (building), green (nature), blue (water) and grey (transportation infrastructure) functions. This will often have to be carried out on the basis of integral area-specific planning. The provincial authorities would be the most obvious choice to direct the process of area-specific development.

- The Government expects provincial and municipal authorities to draw up targets for nature and landscape, and use these to gauge further developments. They should also integrate nature and landscape policy into their environmental, water and spatial planning policies.
- In order to encourage an area-specific approach, the Government is merging a number of existing area-specific subsidy schemes into a new *Subsidieregeling Gebiedsgericht Beleid en Reconstructie (SGB2000)* (subsidy scheme for area-specific policy and reconstruction). The creation of an interlacing network of green and blue (to improve the quality of the agrarian countryside) will largely be realised through this scheme.
- The Government encourages integrated, area-specific landscape development plans and landscape designs.

Stewardship cooperatives: a successful example of regional collaboration

Farmer-led stewardship cooperatives and, more generally, regional collaborations are important pioneers of area-specific initiatives in the rural areas. Stewardship cooperatives have successfully focused on area-specific nature and landscape management for several years. The new subsidy schemes under the regulation *Programma Beheer* (management programme) are also open to cooperatives for nature and landscape management. The role and function of regional collaborations can be strengthened and extended by

- utilising opportunities to broaden the scope of agricultural activity.
- promoting the development of an area-specific approach to rural areas.
- participating in area-specific projects, for example in the framework of the development of an interlacing network of green and blue.

This will also create opportunities for broadening support among individuals and organisations.

Broader funding for nature policy

Our ambitions for nature and landscape demand initiatives and funding from across the board. The Government does not want to have to carry the whole financial burden. This would not accurately reflect the view that nature and landscape are a collective good to which all parties in society have a responsibility. The Government will therefore encourage private investment in nature development and management, and lighten the financial burden of site management. The tax system has been adapted to accommodate 'green' investment.

- The Government would like to make agreements with private investors which link housing and business investment (red) on the one hand with investment in nature (green) on the other.
- In addition the Government will encourage nature managers to obtain supplementary income from providing nature products and services (for example from CO₂ fixing, water extraction, water storage, sponsoring).

2. Programmes

2.1 The International Programme (*Internationaal Natuurlijk*)

The International Programme (*Programma Internationaal Natuurlijk*) prescribes the Netherlands' contribution to international nature conservation. The impact of nature-related activities within our borders are only discussed in general terms in this programme. Concrete policy measures which arise from international commitments are not discussed here, but in the following Programmes (2.2 to 2.5).

The main points of the programme are given below. On the basis of this memorandum and the Fourth National Environmental Policy Plan, the Government will publish a detailed programme of Dutch international biodiversity policy at the end of 2000. This will be the sequel to International Nature Management Programme (*PIN*) 1996-2000. In drafting the new programme the Government will take into consideration the evaluation of *PIN 1996-2000* and current development cooperation policy. It will also lay down new policy objectives and details of how we will use the available instruments and funding, both in collaboration with other nations, to realise our commitment to international agreements and multi-lateral organisations. In addition, in a separate memorandum in 2001, we will indicate how development cooperation policy can further contribute to maintaining biodiversity.

2.1.1 Purpose

The Netherlands aims to help achieve a structural reversal of the worldwide loss of biodiversity through international cooperation.

Objectives

1. To protect ecosystems and landscapes of international significance, and to ensure a viable size and quality; in particular with respect to forests, wetlands, sea and coasts.
2. To bring about sustainable utilisation of natural resources in sectors such as farming, fisheries, tourism, trade and in development cooperation.

2.1.2 Why do we need an International Nature Programme?

- The Netherlands is not an isolated speck on the map, but part of a larger international system. This is a unique and prosperous, urban country, but also one that has unique problems. Because of its location the country stands wide open to outside influences, so that in many cases it would benefit from a cross-border approach (for example for rivers, sea, wetlands, catchment areas, bird migration routes, landscape and forests).
- Internationally, sustainable development and the conservation of biodiversity form the basis of nature policy. The actual developments are unfortunately far removed from this policy. Nature throughout the world is under siege and global diversity is declining at an ever-greater rate. The Global Biodiversity Assessment (UNEP), the Global Environmental Outlook (UNEP) and the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FAO), carried out regularly, confirm this.
- As a prosperous country the Netherlands feels a responsibility to help protect nature areas of outstanding international significance in other countries. This applies particularly to nature in regions where people's attention is fully taken up with the daily struggle to survive. The Netherlands helps the cause of nature conservation here through targeted funding and the use of our own specialist knowledge and expertise.
- Our efforts to protect nature and the environment on a global scale are only credible when we propagate a similar approach at home (for example, sustainable utilisation of timber, fisheries, international tourism, but also the realisation of the National Ecological Network).
- The Netherlands also feels responsible for the effects of Dutch economic activity (production, consumption, trade) on nature and landscape in other countries.

2.1.3 Main points of the Programme

International value of Dutch wetlands for water birds

Migratory water birds are perhaps the most vivid example of how nature within our borders is linked with nature in the wider world. The Netherlands is located at the junction of flyways between the Arctic tundra and the African continent. The Dutch wetlands and grasslands are of great international importance for water birds throughout the year. Our country is visited by 127 species of water bird each year. These visits often involve a very large part of the total species population. For 91 of these species at least 1% of their total population is dependent on the Netherlands. For 55 of the species this is 10% or more.

Source: Nature Assessment Bureau

- The Netherlands continues to contribute actively to the development and implementation of international treaties on nature and landscape and to the implementation programmes of multi-lateral organisations. Before entering into international agreements their consequences for Dutch policy must be assessed.
- The Netherlands' current international commitments regarding biodiversity and some important ecosystems (forests, wetlands, rivers, sea and coast) will be continued. The Netherlands will press for operational definitions of the guiding principles of international treaties, such as ecosystem approach, criteria for sustainable use and the precautionary principle. The Netherlands is also committed to the development of unambiguous indicators to substantiate the aims for preserving biodiversity internationally. Biodiversity should be integrated in policy for other sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism.
- The Netherlands will promote further integration of biodiversity in development aid policy. The destruction of biodiversity can result in extreme poverty and lead to disasters such as flooding and landslides.
- In addition to the existing emphasis on biodiversity the Netherlands will commit itself, within the framework of the Pan-European countryside treaty, to the development of an international landscape policy aimed at conservation and development of characteristic landscapes, which is also compatible with the Dutch situation as a dynamic and urbanised delta area. This means that landscape policy must not only be conservationist, but also include scope for development.
- The Netherlands strongly supports European cooperation in the development and implementation of nature and landscape policy, and its integration in the European Union's sector policy for agriculture and fisheries. In particular the Netherlands will contribute actively to the realisation of a Pan-European ecological network and in this way promote cross-border cooperation. In addition, as a Member State of the EU, the Netherlands will give specific support in nature and landscape matters to acceding countries.
- Internationally, the Netherlands will focus on cooperation with countries that operate from a similar position as itself and with countries that also have a responsibility to protect sea, coasts, rivers, wetlands, forests and migratory birds.
- The Netherlands will meet its international commitments and concentrate more specifically on nature and landscapes that are characteristic of our country (see the Water Programme). This will further enhance our country's identity and biodiversity.

Map: Designated areas based on international directives (Wild Birds Directive, Habitat Directive and Wetlands)

Biodiversity versus nature

The Nature Policy Plan was mostly concerned with nature, with plants and animals. After successful global consultations, the concept of biodiversity was also introduced into Dutch policy. The introduction of this concept did not so much result in a radical policy shift, but rather allowed us to build on trends that already existed in our policy. Nature policy was broadened and directed more to the socio-economic aspects and functional relationships of nature. The objectives of the Biodiversity Convention expressed this perfectly, combining conservation with sustainable use. In short, biodiversity could serve as standard for developments in nature policy.

Does this mean that the word 'nature' can be relegated to the wastepaper basket and that from now on our policy will be developed under the label 'biodiversity'? Not at all. 'Nature' remains above all a word that appeals to people and that reason alone makes it very important for policy. People simply don't say, "I feel like getting closer to biodiversity today". Internationally however, we need the term 'biodiversity' because it reflects our efforts to achieve responsible and effective nature policy. In short, both terms remain in use and are necessary and will sometimes unavoidably be used at the same time.

Source: Rientjes, S., 1999. Biodiversiteit: de introductie van een nieuw begrip in beleid en onderzoek.

International legislation and treaties for nature policy

Instruments and treaties	Year	Objectives
Ramsar Convention	1971	Protection and responsible utilisation of internationally significant wetlands
Bern Convention	1979	Protection of European wild flora and fauna and their habitats
Bonn Convention	1979	Protection of migratory species of wild animals and their habitats
EU Wild Birds Directive	1979	The protection of birds living in the wild
EU Habitat Directive	1992	The conservation of natural and semi-natural habitats and species of wild flora and fauna
OSPAR	1992	The protection of the marine environment in the north-east Atlantic
Convention on Biological Diversity	1992	The protection and sustainable utilisation of biodiversity and fair division of benefits of utilisation
Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy	1995	Removing the greatest threats and increasing the resilience and ecological coherence of European biodiversity
EU Biodiversity strategy	1998	Reverse the decline in biodiversity and improve the protection status of species and ecosystems
UNESCO Convention on World Heritage	1998	Convention under which nature and cultural areas of outstanding universal value can be proposed as world heritage sites

Source: *Natuurbalans 99; RIVM/DLO 1999*

2.1.4 The Programme

The Government aims to achieve its objectives by the following action.

Objectives	Targets
To protect ecosystems and landscapes of international significance, and to ensure a viable size and quality; in particular with respect to forests, wetlands, sea and coasts.	By 2020, there will be a Pan-European ecological network which incorporates the Dutch National Ecological Network.
	2. By 2010, globally binding agreements on protection and sustainable use of forests will be worked out in detail.
	3. More international recognition for sustainable water management and for the necessity of wetland management
To bring about sustainable utilisation by	4. By 2010, operational verifiable criteria will

<p>integration of biodiversity in sectors such as farming, fisheries, tourism, trade and in development cooperation.</p>	<p>be developed for biodiversity policy and will be monitored globally from that moment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Integration of biodiversity in (economic) sector policy. 6. By 2010, there will be concrete global and Pan-European agreements on the promotion of 'good agricultural practice'. 7. Integration of biodiversity in development cooperation policy, as part of the main objective to combat poverty. 8. Dutch international policy is directed at sustainable preservation and wise use of species. 9. The Netherlands aims for a sustainable and wise use and a fair division of the benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources and biotechnology.
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The following Programme shows which policy measures and actions the Government will carry out.

1. By 2020 there will be a Pan-European ecological network, incorporating the Dutch National Ecological Network.

- The Netherlands will support work to ensure that by 2003 the contours of a Pan-European ecological network, on the basis of Natura 2000 (EU and pre-accession countries), and the Emerald Green Network (central and eastern Europe) are clear.
- The Netherlands will give specific support in nature and biodiversity matters to countries acceding to the EU.
- The Netherlands is a dynamic urban delta area. From this position it will participate in consultations concerning a Pan-European landscape treaty, aimed at conservation and strengthening of internationally characteristic landscapes. The Netherlands' standpoint will be that conservation of existing landscape values can and should go hand in hand with the development of new qualities, as laid down in the Rural Area Programme in this document.
- The realisation of the National Ecological Network, including links with nature areas abroad (see the Grand Plan for Nature and the Water Programme), and with special attention to cross-border nature development and management.
- Priority protection will be given to wet landscapes within the National Ecological Network, because of the international importance and characteristic nature of this aspect of Dutch nature (see the Water Programme).

2. By 2010, globally binding agreements on protection and sustainable use of forests will be worked out in detail.

- The Netherlands will support work to ensure that by 2010 globally binding agreements with criteria and indicators for sustainable forestry will be in effect. In this context, the Netherlands will support the designation of at least 25% of the present total global forest area as nature reserves.
- The Netherlands will support work to ensure the implementation of the EU forestry strategy.
- Within the Netherlands policy will be geared to sustainable timber production (see the Grand Plan for Nature).
- The Government will continue to provide development aid for forestry, and will pay more attention to the important role forests play in the regulation of the climate.

3. More international recognition for sustainable water management and for the necessity of wetland management.

- The Netherlands will give priority to the development of wet landscapes (see the Water Programme).
- We will actively fulfil our commitments under the EU framework directive on water (see the Water Programme).
- The Netherlands actively supports further development and strengthening of international wetland policy, including the designation of areas to be protected under the Ramsar Convention.
- The Netherlands, as an important link in the Western Palearctic Waterfowl Agreement, actively supports international cooperation for the protection of migratory waterfowl in line with the African-Eurasian Water bird Agreement (AEWA).

- The Netherlands actively supports the integration of biodiversity into regulations for sea and coastal management in both the European and the global context. We will include biodiversity in our reaction to the advice of the Commission for Water Management in the 21st Century.

4. By 2010, operational verifiable criteria will be developed for biodiversity policy and will be monitored globally from that moment.

- With a view to proper implementation of the Biodiversity Convention the Netherlands will actively support:
 - the operationalisation, in a global context, of the guiding principles expressed in international treaties, such as the ecosystem approach (in 2000), criteria for sustainable use and the precautionary principle (in 2005 in a general sense and in 2010 for the sectors).
 - international agreements regarding concrete targets for the conservation of important ecosystem types.
 - international agreements on monitoring the implementation of biodiversity policy on the basis of a clear set of international biodiversity indicators.

5. Integration of biodiversity in economic sector policy

- By 2003, concrete agreements will have been made with the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors in the Netherlands regarding the protection and sustainable utilisation of biodiversity.
- The Netherlands will promote the integration of biodiversity in the revised EU policy for fisheries and agriculture. This means that we work to remove policy incentives for non-sustainable production and promote sustainable alternatives.
- The Netherlands will promote the realisation of biodiversity policy in programmes of organisations such as the UN, the World Bank, FAO and the World Tourism Organisation.
- In the World Trade Organisation the Netherlands will promote the creation of international trading standards (consumer concerns) which guarantee the realisation of internationally accepted objectives for the protection of biodiversity.
- The Netherlands will actively support the involvement of social partners in the implementation of biodiversity policy and the integration of that policy in sector policy.
- In the Fourth National Environment Policy Plan (NMP4), the Government will indicate which measures it will take to prevent negative consequences of Dutch economic activity on biodiversity in countries abroad.

6. By 2010, there will be concrete global and Pan-European agreements on the promotion of 'good agricultural practice'.

- The Netherlands promotes the realisation of a global working programme for Agro-biodiversity in cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, UNEP, IUCN and the World Bank.
- The Netherlands will promote the creation and proper implementation of the EU Action plan for Agro-Biodiversity and Sustainable Agriculture and its integration in EU policy and in development programmes for eastern and central Europe.
- In the Netherlands, agreements will be made with the agricultural sector about the criteria for good agriculture practice and about cross-compliance (for the period up to 2010 and beyond). Agreements must also be made about the contribution agriculture will make to the protection and sustainable utilisation of biodiversity.

7. Integration of biodiversity in development cooperation policy, as part of the main objective to combat poverty.

- The integration of biodiversity in development aid policy will be continued as part of the main objective of combating poverty. The accent will be placed on
 - promoting real opportunities to combine sustainable use of biodiversity with reducing poverty;
 - measures which contribute to a fair north-south distribution of the benefits of the utilisation of biodiversity;
 - paying specific attention to the effects of policy measures on biodiversity in strategic effect reports and environmental effect reports.
- At international level the Netherlands will promote practical realisation of the objectives of the Biodiversity Convention in order to achieve fair north-south distribution of the benefits of the utilisation of biodiversity. Further study into how this can be realised is required, after which policy will be drafted taking the following relationships into account:
 - revision of agreements on genetic crop resources used for agriculture in the framework of the Biodiversity Convention and the FAO;

- creating a better cohesion with the implementation of existing agreements on intellectual property in the framework of the WTO.
- biotechnology policy (including EU regulation and Biosafety Protocol)
- Making maximum use of opportunities for the integration of biodiversity by
 - paying special attention to the relationship between declining biodiversity and disasters such as floods and landslides.
 - continuing efforts for conservation and sustainable use of forests, with special attention to integrating the role of trees in rural area policy;
 - integration of agro-biodiversity into development aid policy;
 - paying attention to sustainable utilisation of natural ecosystems in dry areas, in order to strengthen the relationship between preservation of biodiversity and combating desertification.
- Working out the theme of the World Water Conference 2000, 'water and nature', with special attention to wetlands and watershed management.
- The Government will publish a separate memorandum in 2001, detailing how development cooperation policy can also contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, thus helping to implement the Biodiversity Convention. The aim is to better interweave the Biodiversity Convention into the action programmes of the Ministry of Development Cooperation.
- The Government aims for better co-ordination of the Dutch contribution to the implementation of the Biodiversity Convention and the Convention on World Heritage.

8. Dutch international policy is directed at sustainable preservation and wise use of species.

- In addition to area-specific nature policy (including the realisation of the National Ecological Network) the Netherlands will work to further strengthen international efforts for both the long-term protection and utilisation of species (for example the Bonn Convention, the Bern Convention, CITES, AEWA, the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives). In particular, we will strive to increase collaborations between nature conservation and animal welfare organisations.
- At home the Netherlands will implement and enforce international agreements carefully and effectively, including the Bern and Bonn Conventions, CITES, AEWA, Bird and Habitat Directives.

9. The Netherlands aims for sustainable and wise use and fair distribution of the benefits of genetic resources and biotechnology.

- Existing international agreements on biodiversity (Biodiversity Convention), use of genetic resources (such as that of the FAO) and protection of intellectual property (including World Trade Organisation) should be better dovetailed.

2.2 The Grand Plan for Nature (*Groots Natuurlijk*)

The Grand Plan for Nature involves the realisation of a network of existing nature and forest areas and new areas to be developed. This is the so-called National Ecological Network. By 2020 the Ecological Network will encompass 750,000 hectares of forest and other nature areas. This will include the wildlife corridors in the Nature Policy Plan and the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas, the robust nature links discussed in this memorandum, 25,000 hectares of rural sites, 250 country estates and 18 National Parks. Parts of the Forest Policy Plan and the Memorandum on Landscape have been integrated into this programme.

2.2.1 Purpose

By 2020 there will be an integrated network of valuable nature areas covering approximately 750,000 hectares on land, known as the National Ecological Network.

Objectives

1. By 2005, the National Ecological Network will be fully delineated and safeguarded in zoning plans.
2. By 2020, the functioning of the Network will be considerably improved due to its stronger spatial cohesion.
3. By 2018, the Network will be complete, its environmental conditions realised and the sustainable management of areas and species will be safeguarded.
4. Any combined use of areas within the Network will be sustainable.

Quantitative targets

The Grand Plan for Nature deals with nature areas on land. The Water Programme deals with the wet landscapes in the National Ecological Network. The target for expansion of the Network, as presented in this Memorandum, is at the time of writing still provisional. An integral spatial planning decision will be made in the scope of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for Rural Areas (SGR2).

Expansion of the National Ecological Network	Size (ha)	To be realised from 1-1-2000 (ha)
Existing forest and other nature area (acquisition) ¹	453,500	21,800
Existing policy by changing land use designation in spatial plans	151,500	104,510
Existing policy without changing land use designation	90,000	51,091
Subtotal according to existing policy	695,000	177,401
New expansion with change of land use designation ²	37,000	37,000
Remaining ecological corridors (not covered by government funding)	12,500	12,500
Total National Ecological Network	744,500	226,901

¹ Acquisition by the National Forest Service, Natuurmonumenten and Provinciale Landschappen

² Provisional target only, pending final decision on the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning. The target now comprises 27,000 ha which will receive a new land use designation for incorporation into the robust nature links, and 10,000 ha of buffer area which will receive a new designation for incorporation into the interlacing network of green and blue.

Qualitative action for the Programme (Government framework 'Nature objectives in the National Ecological Network')¹

	land (ha)	Water (ha)
Large-scale nature	125,000	71,000
1. Streams and sandy woodland	51,000	-
2. River landscapes	12,000	-
3. Marshy landscape	22,000	-
4. Dune landscape	25,000	-
5. Large areas of water ²	15,000	71,000
Vulnerable nature	102,000	-
6. Streams	500	-
7. Brackish water	1,000	-
8. Poor marshy grassland	25,000	-
9. Marshy heaths and raised bog	15,000	-
10. Sand drifts	4,000	-
11. Chalk grassland	500	-
12. Farm heritage land	500	-
13. Salt grassland	3,000	-
14. Bog and clay woodland	10,000	-
15. Nutrient-poor woodland	20,000	-
16. Nutrient-rich woodland	20,000	-
17. Stream valley woodland	2,500	-
Multi-functional nature	468,000	6,229,000
18. Botanical grassland	20,000	-
19. Meadow bird grassland for non-threatened species (lapwing/plover)	70,000	-
20. Meadow bird grassland for threatened species (godwit)	50,000	-
21. Grasslands used by wintering birds	30,000	-
22. Dry heath	30,000	-
23. Other nature areas	4,000	-
24. Mixed woodland and coppice/willow beds	189,000	-
25. Multi-functional woodland	25,000	-
26. Woodland of special nature value	-	-
27. North Sea ³ and other large areas of water ²	-	-
		6,229,000
Large scale and vulnerable nature	227,000	71,000
Multi-functional nature	468,000	6,229,000
Existing policy for National Ecological Network	695,000	6,300,000

¹ Targets based on EU Habitats Directive 1992, Forestry Policy Plan (*Bosbeleidsplan*) 1993, *Rapport Ecosystemen in Nederland, 1995* and the Management Programme (*Programma Beheer*), 1997, national heritage values (Belvedere), the geographical values, agreed timber production targets and leisure requirements. No account has been taken of robust nature links, buffer areas for the green and blue networks and other connecting areas. Targets will be agreed by the Government and the provincial authorities, in consultation with the site managers.

² Further agreements will be made about nature targets in the large areas of water (consisting of the Wadden Sea (including Dollard), IJsselmeer (including peripheral lakes) and the Delta). For the time being the existing division of targets is used.

³ In the North Sea Ecosystem Targets project (*Ecosysteendoelen Noordzee*), a decision must be made by 2002 on how management can be directed at achieving the ecosystem targets.

2.2.2 Why do we need a Grand Plan for Nature?

- The National Ecological Network is an integrated system of nature and forest areas set up to protect species and ecosystems. To a large extent the realisation of the Network fulfils a number of our international commitments, such as the Biodiversity Convention, the Ramsar convention and the European Wild Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. The Network is a part of the Pan-European ecological network, under development.
- The Network fulfils an important function for recreation in our increasingly crowded country. The challenge is to integrate nature and recreation in such a way that people as well as plants and animals will benefit from it. To achieve this it is necessary to consult the public when developing nature and to take account of people's wishes.
- Evaluation of nature policy has revealed that the delineation of the Network is not adequately protected by spatial plans and that fragmentation is preventing biodiversity targets from being met. In particular, it appears that more effective policy is needed for the creation of large areas of nature within an integrated network which includes the water system, and for the strengthening of internationally significant wet landscapes in the Netherlands. In addition, realisation of the Network continues to be behind schedule.
- The Network contributes to the realisation of a number of environmental objectives by producing clean water, sustainable utilisation of raw materials (such as wood) and fixing CO₂. In addition the Network contributes to the protection of important landscape, heritage, archaeological and geographical values.
- The green space, night-time darkness, silence and biodiversity provided by the Network increases the attractiveness of the surrounding area for residential and business location.
- Provided it does not conflict with the objectives of the National Ecological Network, multi-functional use of areas in the Network is possible, For example
 - extensive open-air recreation
 - timber production
 - fisheries
 - military use (within designated areas)
 - water extraction
 - land-dependent sustainable agriculture
 - transport over water.

The possibilities are naturally dependent on specific nature objectives and the measure of sustainability of multi-functional use.

2.2.3 Main points of the Programme

- Existing funds for the realisation of the Network under the Nature Policy Plan and the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas will be continued. This requires accurate delineation of existing areas and areas to be developed in the National Ecological Network. By 2020 the National Ecological Network and its connecting areas will cover an area of approximately 750,000 ha³.
- The timetable agreed in the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas for the realisation of the Network will be adhered to.
- The spatial integration of the Network will be strengthened, action will be taken to improve water and environmental conditions and extra efforts will be made for the development of new wet landscapes in combination with an increased resilience for water systems (see the Water Programme).
- In order to realise sufficient ecological quality within the Network, in this Memorandum the Government lays down minimum quality targets. The Provinces in consultation with site managers will determine where these targets will be realised.
- The Government will strive to put clear and transparent conservation measures in place for nature and landscape. First of all, it will draft national legislation to protect the areas designated under the Wild Bird and Habitat Directives. In addition it will study how harmonisation and simplification of the conservation measures for the remaining part of the Network and woodland areas can be carried out.
- A number of robust nature links will be developed which will link and expand large areas of nature. Robust nature links will form the main arteries of the National Ecological Network, but where feasible they will also have a recreation, water management, landscape or heritage

⁴90,000 ha of which will have agriculture as its primary function (no change of use).

function, and where possible they will also be connected to nature areas in neighbouring countries. In places where robust nature links are crossed by infrastructure we face the challenge of removing barriers to nature.

- In addition to the robust nature links the Network will have to be strengthened in places where it is now fragmented. This will be carried out by a combination of
 - More strategic delineation (as far as is still possible)
 - Improving the quality of the surrounding area, often farmland, through water and environmental policy.
 - Investing in smaller connecting areas and realising an interlacing network of green and blue in the agrarian landscape. This idea has been incorporated in the Rural Area Programme.
- Remove or mitigate any physical barriers within the existing large areas.
- By 2020 the National Ecological Network will have a much more prominent role in society. Its importance will be reflected in its nature targets and in the management of nature areas in the Network. It will embrace values and functions such as peace, darkness and quietness, renewable resources, water purification, water storage and CO₂ fixation. As far as possible the heritage, geographical characteristics and landscape qualities of the Network will be preserved and strengthened.

Environmental conditions for nature

The environmental conditions required for nature to thrive vary from area to area, depending on the type of nature found there, or the type of nature that should be developed. The environmental conditions of an area are determined by the environmental effects of human activity. Pollutants can be spread over a larger area via air and water. Because of the risk of large scale dispersal of harmful effects it is necessary to take the most sensitive areas as the starting point when determining maximum allowable environmental emissions.

Recent studies (*Natuurverkenning 1997* and *Milieubalans, 1998* and *1999*) show that our present nature targets cannot be realised under current environmental and water conditions (acidification, eutrophication and groundwater depletion). The situation is not expected to change in the foreseeable future.

For the long term, environmental standards are necessary that go much further than those intermediate targets laid down in environmental policy to 2010 (and 2015). At this time, there are no targets for reducing noise and light pollution in nature areas. In the long term, such targets will probably need to be laid down.

For the long term the following environmental standards will need to be met if we are to achieve the desired nature quality.

- Acidification: maximum 400 acid components per hectare per year over the Netherlands as a whole, in order to protect the most sensitive nature (= allowable deposition laid down in the Third National Environmental Policy Plan).
- Eutrophication: 25 mg nitrate per litre in ground water (=allowable under EU nitrate directive) and maximum 0.15 mg phosphate per litre in surface water (Third National Environmental Policy Plan) or less if this is necessary for the conservation of vulnerable nature areas.
- Groundwater depletion: Groundwater depletion of nature areas has been halted.

2.2.4 The Programme

The Government intends to reach its objectives by the following action.

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Targets</i>
By 2005, the National Ecological Network will be fully delineated and safeguarded in zoning plans. By 2020, the functioning of the Network will be considerably improved due to its stronger spatial cohesion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 2005 the boundaries of the National Ecological Network will be completely delineated and protected in zoning plans. 2. By 2020 migration between and within nature areas will be possible by the removal of physical barriers. 3. By 2020, seven robust nature links will have

	<p>been created.</p> <p>4. By 2020, an additional 25,000 hectares of wildlife corridors will have been created.</p>
By 2018, the Network will be complete, its environmental conditions realised and the sustainable management of areas and species will be safeguarded.	<p>5. The schedule for realising the quantitative targets of the Network and its expansion will be maintained until 2018.</p> <p>6. By 2018, the management of all areas in the Network will be based on quality targets laid down by the Government.</p> <p>7. A set of National Parks will be realised by 2004, made up of 17 national parks and one cross-border park.</p> <p>8. By 2020 conditions will be in place for the long-term conservation of all species and populations native to the Netherlands occurring in 1982.</p> <p>9. By 2020 the environmental quality will be such that it will not impede the attainment of the quality objectives for the Network.</p>
Any combined use of areas within the Network will be sustainable.	<p>10. Other activities carried out within the Network must be sustainable.</p>

The Programme below gives details of policy measures and actions to be taken by the Government.

1. *By 2005 the boundaries of the National Ecological Network will be completely delineated and protected in zoning plans.*

- The provincial authorities will be responsible for the delineation of the National Ecological Network (ultimately approximately 750,000 ha).
- The Government will make additional agreements with the Provinces regarding the Network's delineation, to be laid down in the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas:
 - Until now, delineation has involved only new nature areas. By 2001 at the latest, the Government wants a definite list of which existing woodland and nature areas will also be included in the Network.
 - Delineation of new areas will take into account the designated areas under the Wild Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive, and the Ramsar Convention (wetlands).
 - Wherever possible, boundaries and nature objectives of a site should make the most of water features with a high ecological potential (application of water system approach) and heritage and geographical values.
 - Where possible, reduce fragmentation of existing Network areas.
- Where opportunities exist (in terms of higher nature and environmental returns) the Government would like to make it possible to redefine borders, while maintaining the overall size of the areas to be delineated (see target 6).
- The whole area of the National Ecological Network must be laid down in zoning plans by 2005 at the latest. Areas within the boundaries of the Network must be protected by the "no, unless, ..." principle in regional and zoning plans. The national and provincial governments will closely monitor policy implementation and enforcement of zoning plans.
- In consultation with site managers the Government will make agreements with the Provinces about the delineation, targets and realisation of the robust nature links and other connecting areas.
 - The Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas will stipulate the degree of protection for connecting areas for the Network and how this is to be realised.
 - The "no, unless ..." principle will be applied to existing or projected areas and components of the robust nature links. This principle will form the basis of regional plans and land use plans.
 - Details about the protection of areas (which degree of protection applies to which areas) will be an integral part of comprehensive plans for the robust nature links and must be approved by the Government.

2. *By 2020 migration within or between areas will be secured by removal of physical barriers.*

- By 2020, the process of correcting the fragmentation caused by rail, road and canal barriers will largely be completed. By 2010 ninety per cent of those bottlenecks that can only be eliminated by infrastructural measures will have been resolved. This policy will be worked out and the financial consequences considered in the first ongoing multi-year programme for defragmentation.
- The design and management of roadside verges, railway embankments and canal banks will pay attention to their role as habitat or corridor for wildlife species.
- The quality of the rural area will be improved by minimising motorised traffic in favour of slow-moving traffic in the areas that make up the National Ecological Network. Motorised traffic will be concentrated in access roads and main roads. Further details will be given in provincial and regional traffic and transport plans.
- In order to realise the robust nature links, an integral design will be made in 2000 for some junctions with infrastructure. We also need to know whether existing budgets are sufficient for good landscape design and what advantages can be gained by the linked development of grey and green functions (win-win situation).
- In 2001, the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment will launch the on-going multi-year programme for defragmentation. Locations for linked grey and green investment will be identified. The first programme will also identify infrastructural barriers to defragmentation and contain revised targets. The Government requests regional and local governments to follow this approach in traffic and transport plans.

3. By 2020, seven robust nature links will have been created.

- By 2020 there will be seven new robust nature links which will strengthen the spatial cohesion and ecological quality of the Network and create larger continuous areas of nature. The provisional delineation of these robust nature links is described in the box at the end of this section.
- These new robust nature links, with an extra area of approximately 27,000 hectares, will do more than fulfil an ecological function alone. They will also link up and enlarge nature areas and ecosystems. Depending on their location they may also contribute to
 - Strengthening landscape and cultural identity;
 - Strengthening the quality of urban green space;
 - Sustainable water management;
 - New recreational opportunities.
- In consultation with the Government, the provincial authorities will draw up a plan, including a spatial design and a timetable, which will form the basis for agreements on delineation and realisation. The development and design of the robust nature links will always be preceded by consultation with the region, local governments, site managers and other interested private parties. The actual realisation of the robust nature links will fall under the four-yearly planning agreements between the Government and the Provinces.
- In the framework of this memorandum funding will be released for the first segment of 13,000 hectares. The Government will first concentrate on the development of the Water Link (excluding tributaries) and the robust nature link from the Veluwe to the Utrechtse Heuvelrug via the Rhine floodplains. It will ask the provincial authorities involved to draw up a plan in accordance with its own preconditions. All plans will be pending the final designation of the robust nature links in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning.
- The provisional delineation of the robust nature links will be considered in the framework of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas with respect to realisation in one or two stages and spatial provisions in general.
- The provisional map marks two 'links' for which financial and spatial provisions are not made at this time. These are the region around the major rivers and the area defined by the green structure plan for the Randstad. They have been included in order to make the map complete. (Policy for the rivers and the urban green space networks is described in the Water Programme and the Urban Area Programme, respectively).

4. By 2020, an additional 25,000 hectares of wildlife corridors will have been created.

- The Provinces have drawn up detailed plans for ecological linking zones, as called for in the Nature Policy Plan and the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas, and mapped them. These plans are tied to a quantitative target of approximately 25,000 hectares of ecological linking zones.
- The Government and Provinces will present a proposal for the realisation of ecological linking zones, including the instruments to be used. This is the result of a covenant signed by both parties in 1997.
- The robust nature links and the interlacing network of green and blue will constitute approximately half of connecting areas identified by the Provinces. The Government asks

Provinces to indicate what part they themselves will implement (either independently or within public-private partnerships).

- The Government will make agreements with the Provinces, in consultation with site managers, regarding boundaries, use and realisation of the robust nature links and other connecting areas (see target 1).

5. The schedule for realising the quantitative targets of the Network and its expansion will be maintained until 2018.

- In order to complete the quantitative realisation of the National Ecological Network, excluding its expansion by 2018, an area of at least 5,500 hectares and on average 6,500 hectares must be handed over annually for nature management. Existing nature areas can simply be handed over. Where necessary, land must first be redeveloped.
- To realise the first segment of 13,000 ha (for the robust nature links and the network of green and blue) in twenty years, an average area of 900 hectares per year will have to be bought and 1,650 hectares developed and handed over for management, regardless of whether management is carried out by public or private parties.
- The Government will indicate what other measures, if any, are necessary to support the realisation of the Network in its interdepartmental land policy study *Interdepartementaal Beleidsonderzoek Grondbeleid (IBO)*.

6. By 2018, the management of all areas in the Network will be based on quality targets laid down by the Government.

- In its report *Ecosystemen in Nederland (1995)* the Government developed a system of agreements relating to the type of nature in the Network. The Government only provides framework objectives for nature in this document, which are to be worked out in detail by other parts of government.
- In 2000 the national and provincial governments will draft joint national targets on the basis of the individual provincial targets. These will be laid down in key planning decisions and will affect all new agreements on the implementation and management of the Network. National and provincial governments will draft management agreements, including quantitative and qualitative targets for 2010, by 2002. The joint national target map can be revised after the boundaries of the Network have been defined in 2005. The Government will continually check to ensure that international commitments, management aims, targets for site managers and budgets are all being met.
- The joint national target map will form the framework for the implementation of the subsidy regulations. The manager will be accountable for the results.
- National and provincial governments, in consultation with site managers, will make further agreements on demarcation and goals for planned and future nature expansion.
- National and provincial governments will look for ways to better integrate species policy and protection of geographical values and cultural heritage into site management.
- The Provinces will use the management agreement and the joint targets as their starting point for provincial area plans and multi-year implementation programmes for the planning and realisation of the Network, including improvements to its spatial cohesion, the landscape, water and environment.
- National and provincial governments, water authorities, site managers and other parties involved will together study how the Network can be strengthened during its realisation period up to 2018. Possibilities include revised delineation to achieve a more sustainable water management and changes to nature goals. The consequences of climate change may also have to be taken into account. The quality of the crucial, larger nature areas (about 20) must also be evaluated and improved. The study will be completed before 2003 and will be used to decide what further measures need to be taken.
- Every four years the national and provincial governments will review and if necessary revise the agreements. If necessary the Government will draw up revised national targets for the following period.

7. A set of National Parks will be realised by 2004, made up of 17 national parks and one cross-border park.

- The Government will establish 17 national parks and one cross-border park.
- In consultation with the Province of Gelderland it will study the possibility of creating a National Park that comprises large areas of the Veluwe.
- The possibility of an International Wadden Sea Park will be explored with the Provinces concerned and Germany and Denmark.

- An action plan to strengthen the quality of the parks system will be developed in consultation with the National Parks. The following subjects will be addressed:
 - More collaboration between the parks.
 - Development and implementation of a quality assessment system.
 - Enlargement of the parks.
 - Improving educational, recreational and amenity functions.

8. By 2020 conditions will be in place for the long-term conservation of all species and populations native to the Netherlands occurring in 1982.

- In compliance with the Bern Convention, ratified by the Netherlands in 1982, the Government will take measures to maintain populations of wild animal and plant species or to increase these populations to a viable level from an ecological, scientific and cultural standpoint. These measures must be reasonable in relation to the aim and must take account of economic and recreational needs. The measures are:
 - By 2020, the National Ecological Network, the connecting areas and the interlacing network of green and blue in the agrarian countryside will be in place and developed such that the preservation of species is enhanced.
 - Both within and outside the boundaries of the Network, additional species-specific measures will be taken to preserve species which are not adequately protected by area-specific policy.
 - By 2005, there will be a Dutch red list of all endangered species and genres on the IUCN endangered animals and plants lists.
 - By 2010, a species protection plan will be drawn up for all species and genres that are endangered or appear on the red lists. An average of five plans are drawn up annually.
 - By 2015, species (genus) protection measures will be carried out on the basis of the species protection plans.

9. By 2020 the environmental quality will be such that it will not impede the attainment of the quality objectives for the Network.

- The Government will facilitate an integral area-specific approach at the provincial level by generating public support, providing subsidy instruments and knowledge, and laying down objectives. As long as the desired environmental standards are not being met, the Government will enable effect-focused measures. If such measures remain necessary after 2010, the Government will reclaim the costs from the responsible sectors ('the polluter pays' principle).
- By 2010, there will be effective buffer areas protecting the larger units of forest and nature in the Network from external influences (groundwater depletion, nitrate). Existing buffer policy for the Network will be amended as necessary in the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.
 - Where possible, environmental objectives should be formulated per region and take into account the nature target types established by the Province. The Government will make implementation agreements with the Provinces, especially to combat groundwater depletion and acidification.
 - By 2001, there will be an updated list of nature-oriented environmental standards which can be used to implement area-specific policy. The Government will make agreements with the Provinces on how to deal with these standards.
- In the Fourth National Environmental Policy Plan, the Government will explain its long-term environmental policy with respect to improving conditions for nature in the Netherlands. Specifically, it will set targets for groundwater depletion, acidification and eutrophication. If necessary, the Government will lay down more stringent environmental objectives for the period after 2010 (see Environmental conditions box). The implementation of long term policy will be a joint effort by the Government, the Provinces and other stakeholders.
- The Government recognises the value that many people attach to 'quiet and darkness'. In its new Environmental Policy Plan the Government will set out how it intends to reduce disturbances to nature.

10. Other activities carried out within the Network must be sustainable.

- Only a handful of species may be hunted. Hunting is prohibited in wetlands and areas designated in the Wild Birds Directive, the Nature Conservation Act (*Natuurbeschermingswet*), except in the case of damage to wild flora and fauna, population management, or when it is deemed necessary in the light of area-specific nature objectives.
- By 2010, 90% of the National Ecological Network will be opened for self-propelled outdoor recreation. The wishes of the public will be taken into account as long as they are in keeping with nature objectives. Public access is included as a requirement in the subsidy regulation *Subsidieregeling Natuurbeheer 2000*. The Provinces will be asked to consult with site managers

about how sites could be developed for recreation. The basic idea here will be that areas of more intensive use are alternated with areas where peace and quiet prevail, so that various recreational activities can be carried out.

- Timber harvesting will be continued within the larger context of sustainable forest management which reflects sustainable use of raw materials and is in line with international nature policy. In 2020, at least 70% of Dutch forests should provide suitable conditions for sustainable forestry, with a harvest equal to the average level in the period 1995-1999. Education and research will be carried out into effectively combining nature management and timber production (integrated forest management). Better utilisation of timber and more added value are also the aims of the timber action programme *Actieprogramma Hout* (chain approach, less bulk, and so on). The aim is to increase specialised timber use (for example, in housing) from approximately 50% now to 75% by 2020. Better quality timber for specialised use will enhance the economic return of forestry.
- Most of the military terrains owned by the Ministry of Defence either border or lie within the National Ecological Network. Much of this land has many nature values and is open to (extensive) recreation. The high nature value of some areas is a result of the Ministry of Defence's investment in site management; the Government holds the view that nature management and military use can go together. Where the combination of nature and military use are in conflict the Government will aim to limit direct and indirect use of those areas within the Network provided there is a suitable alternative. Currently, no conflicts are reported. Further policy for these areas will be developed jointly with the Ministry of Defence and will also take into account international guidelines.
- Water extraction within the Network must be in balance with its ecological functioning. The Dutch Association of Water Supply Companies (VEWIN) will be invited to participate in projects to realise sustainable enterprise and an integral approach to the whole water extraction catchment area. In addition, the possibility of a certification scheme for areas with the combined functions of water extraction and nature will be looked into.
- Sustainable agriculture aimed at maintaining the quality of nature will be encouraged for management areas which are included in the Network.
- The Network includes most of the major bodies of water, which also serve an important purpose for transport by water. This transport must be sustainable and be in keeping with the ecological objectives.
- The fisheries sector requires a healthy and resilient ecosystem if it wants to continue harvesting fish. Integral fish stock management, in which fish stocks can grow to a viable size and build-up, is therefore in the best interests of the fisheries. This approach applies to the North Sea and the large water areas (the Wadden Sea, the Delta and the IJsselmeer region) as well as the inland waterways. Dutch policy will reflect the principles of EU fisheries policy. In 2003 policy on shell fisheries will be reviewed, specifically the possibility of sustainable cockle fishing with regard to nature conservation. Studies will be carried out into ways to reduce the negative effects of fishing methods, i.e. disturbances to the sea bed. Area-specific measures and measures to increase selectivity might provide the answer here.

Robust nature links: linking up and expanding

In order to connect large areas of nature and expand these areas, a number of robust nature links will be realised, with an area of approximately 27,000 hectares. This will improve the spatial cohesion of open spaces at the national level and improve the functioning of an international ecological network. These networks are vital to migratory species like the bittern and the otter, the red deer and the pine martin. The robust nature links will also reduce the risk of extinction for other species in certain parts of the national network. Robust nature links will not only have an ecological function, but will also strengthen the landscape and cultural identity, create more urban green space, facilitate sustainable water management and provide better opportunities for recreation.

As yet, the provisional delineation of the robust nature links is:

Robust nature links	Description	Projected size (ha)
The Water Link	An area comprising peat bogs of international value (from Lauwersmeer and the Eems in Germany down to the Biesbosch and the Zeeland Delta).	13,000-15,000
Veluwe - Utrechtse Heuvelrug	Connecting the Utrechtse Heuvelrug, the Veluwe and the Oostvaardersplassen, and opening corridors to the rivers.	4,000-5,000
Veluwe – Germany	Connecting the Veluwe with German forests via <i>Twente</i>	3,000-4,000
Drents Plateau – Holterberg	Connecting (wet) heaths and stream valley landscapes	1,500-2,000
Stream valleys of the Beerze and the Dommel	Connecting stream valley landscapes of the Dommel and the Beerze and creation of a connection to Belgium.	1,000-1,500
Schinveld – Sittard – Susteren	Expanding and strengthening forest and stream-valley landscape, linking up to nature areas in Germany.	1,000-1,500
Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie and Stelling van Amsterdam	Integrated approach (ecosystem, landscape, recreation and cultural heritage) to strengthening the old water defences which will form a ‘mega moat’ around the Randstad.	500-1,000
Green structure plan for the Randstad	Creation of an inner green ring in the Randstad, aimed at expanding the areas available for recreation near large towns.	No additional land above that already included in earlier plans
Rivers and Delta	Quality improvements in keeping with the measures to increase safety.	No additional land above that already included in earlier plans 24,000-30,000
Total		

The connections between the sandy soil areas and stream valleys in Winterswijk with the Ruurlo area, and the connection of wet heath and forest between Mariapeel and Stippelberg will also be considered before a final decision on the delineation of the robust nature links is made.

2.3 The Water Programme (*Nat Natuurlijk*)

This programme deals with nature policy for areas of water and wet landscapes, such as the North Sea, the coasts, the large water bodies (Wadden Sea, Zuid-Hollandse Delta, the IJsselmeer and the Randmeren), rivers, streams and lakes which are characteristic of the Dutch delta. Almost all these areas are part of the National Ecological Network. Some have also been designated as protected areas under the Wild Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. One of the principles of this programme is that nature, water management, safety and sustainable use must be balanced.

2.3.1 Purpose

By 2020 the wet landscapes so characteristic of the Netherlands will have a more viable size and quality, and will be used only in a sustainable manner.

Objectives

1. Strengthening wet nature areas, in combination with measures to increase the resilience of water systems and strengthen the identity of the Netherlands as a land of water.
2. Promote sustainable use in marine, coastal and large freshwater areas.

Quantitative targets

The targets concern the existing large water areas (the North Sea, Wadden Sea, the Delta, IJsselmeer region and the large river area) with a total area of approximately 6,300,000 hectares and other areas of 'wet landscapes' that are part of the National Ecological Network.

	Size (ha)	Still to be created as of 1.1.2000 (ha)
The North Sea and large water areas	6,300,000	
Wet landscapes ¹	± 5,000	± 5,000
Total wet landscapes	6,305,000	5,000

¹ Includes 500 km of natural banks and fish ladders along and in waterways. The total of 5,000 ha is an estimate of development of wet landscape "on land" and is derived from ICES wet landscape and safety policy for the major rivers. The total area of nature development comprises about 10,500 to 11,500 ha. The remaining area will be realised in the large water areas already included in the National Ecological Network.

2.3.2 Why do we need a Water Programme?

- The water programme underlines the characteristic identity of the Netherlands as a land of water and deltas.
- The international importance of nature in the Netherlands lies in its water systems. The Netherlands must give more priority to wet landscapes; they form our main contribution to national and international biodiversity.
- A large part of the National Ecological Network, namely 6.3 million hectares, is wet: the North Sea, the Wadden Sea, the IJsselmeer and the Delta, the rivers, streams and marshlands. Many species are strongly dependent on these wet landscapes.
- In the Fourth Policy Document on Water Management, a new approach to water management is taken which makes more allowances for nature. Flooding, high water levels and groundwater depletion are recurring and pressing problems which will be exacerbated by the consequences of climate change (rising sea levels and subsidence). The guiding principle for future water management will be to improve resilience of wet areas, water storage and buffering. The water system approach and the principle "space for water" may be combined with the development of wet landscapes and water links, correct the process of groundwater depletion and result in more natural aquatic ecosystems. Large areas of water can serve as buffering and storage zones. At the regional level, creating space where water may flow can go hand in hand with the creation of an interlacing network of green and blue (see Rural Nature).
- The development of characteristic wet landscapes will help to create peace and space and provide opportunities for recreation close to home.
- The large areas of water are of great economic importance for fisheries, transport, water storage and recreation. In the future, greater demands will be made on these areas by other sectors, for example for the generation of wind power and extraction of raw materials.

- These areas are protected as key areas of the National Ecological Network, while at the same time the multi-functional character of the North Sea, Delta and IJsselmeer region is recognised. Compulsory ecological objectives and criteria for sustainable use must be developed for an effective system of protection for the future. This is particularly crucial for the North Sea, where more information is required about nature goals and interests, so that ecological and economic needs can be balanced.

2.3.3 Main Points of the Programme

- Water is becoming an increasingly important theme in nature policy. Water makes the Netherlands safer, its land more sustainable and more beautiful. The resilience of water systems is being increased and existing nature will sometimes have to be adapted to make room for water. At the same time wet landscapes provide new opportunities for nature, often in combination with other functions. The successful approach in the large river region will be carried through to other areas. Full advantage should be taken of any opportunity to combine safety and nature development, providing benefits for both.
- By taking an integrated approach to sea, delta and rivers, the Netherlands will increase its contribution to the international conservation and development of wetlands, natural rivers and other wet ecosystems. Where possible, collaboration should be sought with other countries.
- Existing wet landscapes will be strengthened and expanded:
 - As part of the realisation of the National Ecological Network and the ICES target for wet landscapes (in Zuid-Holland Delta, IJsselmeer, around the major rivers, some stream valleys, nature-friendly banks).
 - As part of the development of robust nature links.
- Sustainable use of sea, coast and large areas of water should preserve and strengthen their ecological quality:
 - Nature quality targets will be established for large areas of water, from the freshwater lakes in Friesland to the Delta, from the North Sea to the Wadden Sea.
 - The Government agrees that human activity can be sustainably combined with long-term ecological objectives. Agreements regarding the sustainable use of the North Sea, Wadden Sea and other large areas of water (national and international) will therefore be made – and enforced – with users and other stakeholders. Certain uses may need to be restricted to specific zones.
- The identity of our country will be strengthened by the development of new wet landscapes and the restoration of two water defence lines important to our cultural heritage, the Hollandse Waterlinie and the Stelling van Amsterdam.

The development of wet landscapes in and around the national waters will be carried out in close collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Ministry Transport, Public Works and Water Management. The Government announced extra funding for the development of wet landscapes in its coalition agreement, and a programme for these funds was set up in 2000. Nature development targets linked with safety measures along the major rivers have also been agreed.

The water authorities will play an important role in the development of wet landscapes at the regional level. They will develop schemes for water conservation and water storage. The aim here too is to combine solutions for water problems with nature development. The possibilities are being studied in consultation with the water authorities.

2.3.4 The Programme

The Government has set the following targets.

Objectives	Targets
Strengthen wet landscapes and characteristic identity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 2005, there will be quality targets for the wet areas of the National Ecological Network; by 2018 they will be integrated into nature development and management. 2. By 2020, better functioning of the Network and the characteristic wet landscapes. 3. By 2010, the size and quality of wet landscape in and around the large rivers and large areas of (inland) water will have been increased considerably and sustainable multifunctional use will be ensured. 4. By 2010 the estuary character and natural dynamics of the Delta, coast and Wadden sea will have become more marked. The transitional zones from freshwater to seawater and from water to land will have been restored.
Sustainable use of sea, coast and large areas of water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. By 2002, ecological quality targets for the North Sea will have been formulated and will form the basis for sector agreements on sustainable use. 6. By 2010 the unique character of the Wadden Sea will be internationally protected and where necessary its use will be brought into balance with its ecological function. 7. By 2020 activity in and around the IJsselmeer region will be in equilibrium with its key qualities openness, peace and space, natural heritage and cultural identity.

The programme below details the actions to be carried out by the Government.

1. By 2005, there will be quality targets for the wet areas of the National Ecological Network; by 2018 they will be integrated into nature development and management.

- The Government and Provinces, in consultation with site managers will make further agreements on delineation and function (see the Grand Plan for Nature).
- In accordance with the EU framework directive for water, measures will be undertaken to achieve the so-called 'good water status' for the ecological quality of surface water, coastal water and ground water by 2010. For international rivers, the Netherlands will strive to attain this objective with other riparian states.

2. By 2020, better functioning of the Network and the characteristic wet landscapes.

- Realisation of the Water Link, the robust nature link Waterlinie - Stelling van Amsterdam, the link between the Veluwe and the river area and the river area itself (see Grand Plan for Nature). The actions of different parts of government and nature conservation organisations need to be coordinated in order to optimise the benefits of combined water policy (safety, storage, buffering) and nature policy (including recreation). This will be studied. The study will also be directed at the possibility of realising functional combinations through a design-driven approach.
- In defining the area and the criteria for the interlacing network of green and blue, the Government will take account of requirements with respect to water retention and water storage (win-win situation). This will be demonstrated in a number of pilot projects carried out by the provincial authorities and in cooperation with the regional water authorities (see Rural Nature programme).
- The reconstruction of sandy soil areas will help to strengthen the quality and identity of a number of stream valley landscapes. The Provinces involved will be responsible for submitting plans. The Government will facilitate operations by providing relevant knowledge.

3. By 2010, the size and quality of wet landscape in and around the large rivers and large areas of (inland) water will have been increased considerably and sustainable multifunctional use will be ensured.

- ICES agreements have been made regarding the development of robust wet landscapes with opportunities for recreation near cities.
 - 3,000 hectares of new wet landscape combined with recreational use will be realised in the urban areas of the Zuid Holland Delta, in addition to Network targets.
 - 3,000 hectares of easily accessible wet landscape will be developed along the IJsselmeer.
- In addition, efforts will focus on the ecological recovery of national waters and the strengthening of water systems in the north of the country.
 - The normal programme for restoration and development of national waters, including banks, will be accelerated.
 - The functioning and quality of 500 hectares of existing water systems in Friesland (Friese Meren/wet heath) will be restored (streams, river banks, former inlets).
- In anticipation of the results of the Committee for Water Management in the 21st century, developments for water and nature will be combined as much as possible, in order to optimise our use of space. Where possible, 'space for water' -- increasing safety -- will be combined with nature development in the broadest sense.
- ICES agreements have been made for the river area about new spatial conditions to ensure adequate protection against flooding and a more resilient water system.
 - By 2015, 3,000 to 4,000 hectares of new nature along the Rhine tributaries and the Maas will have been developed in addition to other nature area targets.
- The above area targets will be laid down in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. Depending on the results of various studies, the claim on 'space for water' may be increased.

4. By 2010 the estuary character and natural dynamics of the Delta, coast and Wadden sea will have become more marked. The transitional zones from freshwater to seawater and from water to land will have been restored.

- Coast and Wadden Sea. By 2010 the dynamics of the North Sea and Wadden Sea coast will be largely restored: there will be more room for natural processes to enhance resilience and provide greater safety.
- Delta. By 2010 the estuary of the Rhine, Maas and Schelde will be more coherent and more natural, and will serve as a natural buffer between the Randstad and the sea. Policy for the development of the *Voordelta* and its restoration as an estuary will be continued and combined with safety measures and nature conservation in the Biesbosch and the Westerschelde. This will include the strengthening of the freshwater/saltwater transition zone in the Haringvliet.

5. By 2002, ecological quality targets for the North Sea will have been formulated and will form the basis for sector agreements on sustainable use.

- In 2001, the Government will present an action plan for public consultations on the sustainable use of the North Sea. These consultations are necessary to reach agreement on ecosystem targets (see box). Existing national and international policy strategies will be followed, for example the EU fisheries review in 2003.
- The Government will develop procedures to evaluate (new) types of exploitation in the North Sea, to be laid down in the *Vijfde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening* and the *2^e Structuurschema Groene Ruimte*.
- Protection policy for the North Sea will be linked to its new status as a key area within the National Ecological Network.

6. By 2010 the unique character of the Wadden Sea will be internationally protected and where necessary its use will be brought into balance with its ecological function.

- International agreements will be implemented. The Government, provincial authorities and local authorities will work together closely on this.
- The possibility of an international nature park will be studied with respect to strengthening international cooperation in this area. The Netherlands will raise this at the next conference of the trilateral Wadden Sea Conference in 2001.
- In 2003, shell fisheries policy will be reviewed, with special attention for the possibility of combining sustainable cockle fishing with nature.
- The Wadden Sea's unique character as a wetland must be maintained. It is crucial in this respect that drilling for natural gas -- if it is to take place -- causes no subsidence. This would permanently damage the ecosystem of the Wadden Sea. If there is any doubt drilling will not be allowed.

7. By 2020 activity in and around the IJsselmeer region will be in equilibrium with its key qualities openness, peace and space, natural heritage and cultural identity.

- Policy to underline the importance of the IJsselmeer region as nature area of international standing will be carried out and reinforced by the use of ICES measures.
- Future water policy in the IJsselmeer region will be developed on the basis of the results of a project on water management in the “wet heart” of the Netherlands (*Waterhuishouding in het Natte Hart*) and the recommendations of the Commission for Water Management in the 21st Century. The opportunities for nature development will be exploited to the full.
- At the end of 2000, the Government will publicise the main points of new, integral policy for the development and management of the IJsselmeer region in the policy document *Integrale Visie IJsselmeergebied*. The policy is the result of a cooperation of many different government bodies, sectors and other organisations. These integral policy decisions are partly motivated by (economic) use.

Ecosystem targets for the North Sea

The Dutch North Sea is a key area of the National Ecological Network, but it is also multi-functional and intensively used. Compared to the quantity of nature policy for land, there is little policy for the North Sea. North Sea policy is expressed in ecosystem targets for the long term. These targets are indicative only, and expressed in qualitative terms. The consequences of the nature targets for the North Sea are not clear.

The various public authorities, sectors and nature and environmental organisations have been consulted on the feasibility of these ecosystem targets and how they may be achieved. International commitments naturally have to be taken into account here too.

The ecosystem targets are based on the principle that the North Sea ecosystem should be as natural as possible, and be characterised by its own specific biodiversity and landscape. The exploitation of sea and coast must be kept in balance with their ecological function.

The ecosystem targets for the North Sea are:

Coherence and dynamics

1. Natural dynamic processes, as essential conditions of a natural sea and coastal zone (for example ongoing sand and silt deposition in the Wadden Sea, and sand and salt deposition on shore).
2. Maintain and if necessary restore food chains and the accompanying biological resilience of the sea.
3. Enhance the estuarine character of the coastal area, especially the Delta area (natural transition of salt – brackish-fresh water, tidal and inter-tidal areas).

Biodiversity

4. Maintain and where necessary restore the characteristic populations and associated habitats of sea, coastal zone and Delta area.
5. Maintain a policy of very limited algae control, maintain and if necessary restore natural diversity of plankton species.
6. Maintain and if necessary restore diversity of sea bed fauna, including populations of long-living and slow reproducing species.
7. Enhance diversity of fish fauna by maintaining and if necessary restoring
 - spawning and nursery areas
 - a more balanced population make up
 - natural fish stock numbers
 - populations of long-living and slow reproducing species.
8. Maintain and where necessary restore conditions for moulting, wintering, migrating and breeding sea and coastal birds, through measures aimed at food stocks, space and breeding grounds.
9. Maintain and where necessary restore conditions for marine mammals.

Amenity Value

10. Enable people to continue to experience the dynamics of natural forces – wind, water, sand and salt – in the transitional zone between open water and land.
11. Preserve openness, endless horizon, quiet and darkness; this applies to the whole coastline from north to south (from Zeeuws Vlaanderen to the Dollard area).
12. Retain, and where possible improve opportunities for observing birds, fish and marine mammals.

2.4 The Rural Area Programme (*Landelijk Natuurlijk*)

This programme aims to improve the quality of the landscape, ecological values and recreational opportunities in rural areas. This programme is directed at open countryside that does not fall within the boundaries of the National Ecological Network and is not situated near the major cities. The programme is an agglomeration of landscape policy described in the Landscape Memorandum, the policy for nature outside the National Ecological Network described in the Nature Management Plan, parts of the Forest Management Plan and the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.

2.4.1 Purpose of the Programme

By 2020 the quality of the rural areas with respect to landscape and ecological values will be improved, the sustainable use of the rural area will be ensured for the long term, and an interlacing network of green and blue will cover one-fourth of the agrarian countryside.

Objectives

1. Maintain and conserve landscape and ecological values in the rural areas.
2. By 2010, a marked rise in sustainable use of the rural areas.
3. By 2020, an interlacing network of green and blue will enhance at least 400,000 hectares of agrarian countryside.

Quantitative programme targets

The targets below include nature areas, forests and landscapes as well as new recreational zones in countryside outside the boundaries of the National Ecological Network away from major cities.

	Area (ha)	to be realised after 1-1-2000 (ha)
existing forest and other nature areas	96,500	-
existing policy to increase nature area without changing zoning (countryside stewardship; agri-environment schemes) ¹	15,000	8,260
existing policy for wintering birds and meadow bird management	30,000	8,000
existing policy for afforestation and landscape	38,400	33,050
subtotal existing policy		
interlacing network of green and blue	179,900	49,310
	40,000 ²	40,000
total	219,900	89,310

¹ countryside stewardship carried out on 10,000 ha

² This target is provisional and is based on a number of assumptions. The goal is to boost the quality of 400,000 ha of man-made landscape by creating an interlacing network of green and blue which takes up 10% of the total area (i.e. 40,000 ha). A buffer of 10,000 ha of bought-up land is included in this figure and is also included in the overview in section 2.2.1.

2.4.2 Why do we need a Rural Area Programme?

- Growing public demand for pleasant living and working environment.
- The 1997 National Nature Management Outlook and all Nature Balance Reports since then have pointed out the declining quality of the rural area with respect to landscape and ecological value. In particular, many landscapes are at risk of losing their specific character -- the endless openness, or the intimacy afforded by hedgerows -- to the general trend of uniformity and fragmentation. Current policy is unable to reverse this trend.
- Spatial planning decisions often do not sufficiently consider the impact of interventions (and more insidious processes with a large appetite for land) on the quality of nature and the landscape in the rural area.
- There is a high shortage of space in many parts of the Netherlands, but social and economic developments in our country cannot be brought to a stop. The challenge to the Dutch Government is to use economic developments to create a spatial movement towards a more attractive, greener country. Sound design-driven and development-driven landscape strategies which explicitly include the realisation of substantial green values are required. Such an approach is far from common at the moment.

- Developments in the agricultural sector – its economic role in the countryside and the impact of international developments – necessitate alternative sources of income in parts of the rural area. Public demand is growing for products and production methods that have a minimal impact on the environment and nature.
- Global climate change means that water management policy in the future will be characterised by a water systems approach, which includes retention areas and buffer zones to conserve excess water for periods of drought. This will have an enormous impact on the rural area.

2.4.3 Main points of the Programme

- This Programme aims to boost the spatial and green qualities of the rural area with a combination of protective and developmental strategies.
- We need to define which areas are to be protected. These are the National Ecological Network (see Grand Plan for Nature) and some of the areas identified in the Belvedere Memorandum (including World Heritage sites). A protection scheme will be presented for these areas in the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.
- A pro-active, development-oriented approach for the rest of the country. The question is not whether development is allowed, but where and how. The challenge to Government is to bring together red (housing and businesses), green (nature, cultural heritage), blue (water) and grey (infrastructure) functions in an integral landscape design. Red developments should go hand in hand with development of green and blue. In this way, the quality of the landscape becomes a distinct factor in spatial decision-making (design-driven planning), rather than an empty framework in which decisions can be fitted. An integral approach stimulates regional win-win solutions and is in line with the development-driven approach presented in the Belvedere Memorandum.
- Provincial and municipal authorities play a crucial role in design-driven planning, since decisions must trickle down to spatial plans at the provincial and (inter-)local level. All developments that affect the quality of the landscape should undergo an impact assessment by committees that work along the same lines as municipal amenities committees. (Inter-) municipal landscape plans might serve as frameworks for impact assessment in the future.
- Both generic and area-specific measures (environmental policy, making EU policy more green, etc.) should be used to bring about a gradual improvement to the quality of nature and landscapes.
- The creation of an interlacing network of green and blue strands will improve the quality of a substantial portion of the agrarian landscape. The areas concerned have landscape, nature and heritage values. The most must be made of farmers' potential as managers of an attractive countryside with plenty of recreational opportunities. Combinations with water management will be realised where possible to help protect species who depend on areas outside the National Ecological Network for their survival, to enhance the natural prevention of diseases and plagues in farming, and to enhance the natural filtration of surface water.

An interlacing network of green and blue strands

In many parts of the Netherlands, fragmentation and uniformity have not done the landscape much good. In the past, the landscape changed as one travelled from region to region, now the countryside is more of the same. The landscape has been neglected too long; repair, renewal and management of characteristic elements and structures are much-needed in many parts of the rural area and on the urban fringe. Traditional agrarian landscapes in the Netherlands are disappearing, and with them regions are losing their own identity and their appeal.

An attractive, 'biodiverse' agrarian landscape should have an interlacing network of landscape elements, waterways and riverbanks, ponds and swamps, broad verges, intimate parcels of woodland and pathways. A sufficiently large, well-designed, well-planned and well-managed network contributes greatly to rural nature values, regional identity and recreational appeal. These green and blue strands link up nature areas and are crucial to the survival of species such as the tree frog, the root vole and the partridge. The green and blue strands also enhance and shape the landscape as well as the recreational byways running through it.

The interlacing network of landscape elements has disappeared from much of the Dutch countryside in the last one hundred years, or has been severely damaged by agricultural and urban developments and infrastructure. As a result the Dutch landscape has become highly uniform, with isolated nature areas scattered in an ocean of intensively used farmland. There are three main reasons for our wish to reverse this trend. Firstly, a growing demand is foreseen for accessible green space, in terms of both getting there and having right of way. This is the result of increasing recognition of the value of green space for recreation, homes and business locations. Strategic networks of green and blue, with public foot and cycle paths open up the agrarian countryside and increase its amenity value. Secondly, links between nature areas boost the quality of the agrarian landscape and strengthen the National Ecological Network, thus helping us realise our commitment to maintain and increase biodiversity. Thirdly, landscape elements

in an agrarian setting harbour pollinating insects and the natural enemies of crop pests.

The Government will therefore subsidise the restoration of old landscape elements according to 21st century insights. By 2020, an interlacing network of green and blue should be woven through at least one fourth of the rural area. According to our information, 1 hectare of restored landscape – with new landscape, ecological and recreational value – enhances the quality of 10 hectares of agrarian countryside. Government subsidies will be available for both the construction and management of characteristic regional landscape elements. The restoration of landscape elements will depend largely on regional initiatives and plans. Criteria for funding by the Government will be based on efficiency and effectiveness. In other words, areas qualifying for funding are characterised by a fragmented ecological network with insufficient connection with the National Ecological Network, neglected landscape elements in need of restoration, unused potential for quiet forms of recreation, and possibilities for combining nature and recreation functions with water management and region-specific environmental measures.

In most cases, new or restored landscape elements will remain private property, and management agreements will be made with the owners, usually farmers.

Our primary partners in the realisation of the green and blue networks are farmers, water boards, recreation and tourist boards, the recreation industry, municipal authorities, and organisations in landscape management. The provincial authorities will direct and coordinate the implementation.

2.4.4 The Programme

The Government aims to achieve its objectives by the following action.

Objectives	Action
Maintain and reinforce the landscape and ecological qualities of the rural area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safeguard landscapes, national parks and country estates of outstanding national and international value. 2. Land use changes should improve the quality of nature and landscape wherever possible. 3. In order to maintain and enhance the landscape qualities of a number of characteristic Dutch landscapes and to improve co-operation between public authorities and other interested parties, the Government is considering setting up National Landscapes. 4. By 2020, full realisation of the existing action plan for agri-environment schemes, wintering birds and meadow bird management, and expansion of forest and landscape elements outside the National Ecological Network.
By 2010 the sustainable use of nature and landscape will be increased substantially.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. By 2010 agreements will have been made about the development of good agricultural practice.
By 2020 at least 400,000 hectares of the agricultural man-made landscape will have had a specific quality impulse.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. By 2020, a substantial improvement of 400,000 hectares of agrarian countryside by boosting the landscape, ecological and recreational quality of 40,000 hectares. Specifically, the development, restoration and management of characteristic landscape elements in an interlacing network of green and blue. 7. By 2010, a network of cycle paths and footpaths will have opened up the agrarian countryside.

The Programme below shows the policy measures and action to be taken by the Government

1. Safeguarding landscapes, national parks and country estates of outstanding national and international value.

- In addition to the National Ecological Network, landscapes of outstanding national and international value need to be protected. The Belvedere memorandum identifies 74 exceptional cultural heritage sites (the Belvedere areas), which of course include listed World Heritage sites. In the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas, the Government will indicate which of these sites will be given priority protection and what this protection involves. The Government will also examine which sites of special cultural or natural value, in addition to those already on the cultural heritage lists, might be nominated for UNESCO's World Heritage Site list. A nomination is currently being prepared jointly with Germany and Denmark for parts of the Wadden Sea region.
- Historic countryhouses and rural estates protected under the Estates Act and historic sites protected under the 1988 Monuments Act must be preserved.

2. Land use changes should improve the quality of nature and landscape wherever possible.

- The Government strives for a more pro-active approach to areas outside the ones enjoying strict Government protection because of their national or international nature value. Landscape quality will be used as a criterion in decisions based on design-driven planning. In the past, landscape quality was a jacket into which decisions were fitted after the fact.
- New policy will be directed by two principles, namely
 - In principle, land use changes are permitted provided they are based on sound design.
 - Plans should strive for improved landscape quality whenever possible. To that end, the quality of landscape design should be given more attention in planning and decision-making processes.
- This implies the following:
 - Usually, only minor, carefully planned changes in a larger area will suffice. Assessment of the changes can be made on the basis of existing regional or local landscape policy or landscape development plans. This will provide a clear reference framework for policy decisions. Activities which will effect the landscape need to be assessed by independent experts prior to decision-making, as part and parcel of a landscape-oriented decision-making process.
 - The Government sees a role for the Provincial Councils in the protection of areas of national and international nature value outside the National Ecological Network. Landscape development plans will be assessed at provincial level on the basis of a number criteria that will be further developed in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. (This will include cultural heritage, earth science and characteristic landscape).
 - Planners are faced with a greater challenge in areas of bustling economic activity where there are also ambitious plans for nature, water and landscape. The quality of the plans will have to bring the two extremes together. An integral regional development plan offers the solution and should be used more often as the basis for more concrete land use plans. This is certainly true if it includes opportunities for the financing of nature, landscape and cultural heritage by the other, economically stronger, functions (house building, business, water extraction). This approach is currently being considered in four studies.
 - This approach will be further developed in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas using the preliminary results of the studies.
 - The Government will set the example by increasing its efforts to realise plans of high quality which take account landscape value. At national level the quality control of large projects must be ensured, in order to realise high quality planning. The Provinces will be consulted on ways of safeguarding the quality of provincial and regional plans.
- For the period 2001 to 2006, 50 million guilders has been set aside to implement the policy outlined above. Concrete measures will be developed in collaboration with the Provinces and municipal authorities.

3. In order to maintain and enhance the landscape qualities of a number of characteristic Dutch landscapes and to improve co-operation between public authorities and other interested parties, the Government is considering setting up National Landscapes.

- The Netherlands is made up of several landscapes with their own special identity, in which housing, work, recreation, nature and landscape are combined. To preserve and reinforce the special identity of these areas, the Government is considering designating them National Landscapes. The guiding principle here will be to combine the preservation and development of the identity and quality of the landscape with selective investment which can strengthen these qualities. The *Groene Hart* and the Zeeland/Zuid Holland Delta are examples of such landscapes. The Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas will provide further policy details and identify the areas to be designated. The Government and the

Provinces will then set about to encourage the development of regional partnerships between public authorities and other interested parties and promote a design-led approach.

4. By 2020, full realisation of the existing action plan for agri-environment schemes, wintering birds and meadow bird management, and expansion of forest and landscape elements outside the National Ecological Network.

- By 2020 management agreements will be in place for 15,000 hectares of agricultural countryside outside the National Ecological Network.
- By 2020 30,000 hectares of agricultural countryside will be managed in a way that takes account of meadow birds and winter visitors, such as geese.
- By 2020 38,400 hectares of forest and landscape elements will have been developed.

5. By 2010 agreements will have been made for the development of good agricultural practice

- (Also see International Programme)
- Existing and future instruments for national and European agricultural policy will be geared to the preservation and reinforcement of the quality of nature and landscape.
- The mechanism of cross-compliance will have been developed for maize and potato starch. The Government will strive for a growth model aimed at gradually expanding the scope of cross-compliance for nature and landscape and will make agreements with agriculture sectors.
- By 2003 agreements with the sector will have been made about realising its part of the Biodiversity Convention. This will include the preservation and management of genetic sources in agriculture, the use of more varieties in arable farming and horticulture, a healthy soil eco-system and the utilisation of natural landscape elements in pest and disease control.
- There will be strict policy to concentrate glasshouse cultivation in specific zones. Zoning plans should prevent the scattering glasshouses over the landscape; where possible, existing areas will need to be restructured.

6. By 2020, a substantial improvement of 400,000 hectares of agrarian countryside by boosting the landscape, ecological and recreational quality of 40,000 hectares. Specifically, the development, restoration and management of characteristic landscape elements in an interlacing network of green and blue.

- In this memorandum the Government reserves funds to strengthen the landscape, ecological value and recreational value of approximately 200,000 hectares of rural area, initially. This means that an initial segment of 20,000 hectares will be redeveloped (of which no more than 5,000 hectares will be acquired). The funding provided by this memorandum will enable development of approximately half of the ultimate network of green and blue. The results of the first part will be considered in the development of the second part.
- Ultimately, the Government aims improve 400,000 ha of agrarian countryside by redeveloping a second segment of 40,000 hectares. In theory, land-use would not be changed and the land would continue to be managed by the existing owners. A new function might be given to 10,000 of the 40,000 hectares (for example following land acquisition to strengthen ecological water systems in National Ecological Network or to realise an ecological corridor).
- In developing the interlacing network of green and blue – under the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas – the Government will work from the following principles:
 - The network will involve areas that have special landscape, nature or culture heritage value. Possible areas will be mapped out in the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas. Project proposals within these areas will then be evaluated, and the best proposals will receive funding. In general terms, evaluation criteria will concern:
 - Strengthening of landscape quality (suitable for the type of landscape and regional identity).
 - Improving ecological function (also of the National Ecological Network).
 - Implementation of species policy (including meadow birds).
 - Integral area-specific structure.
 - Improving opportunities for recreation.
 - Improving cultural heritage values.
 - Contribution to a healthy and resilient water system.
 - Rewarding regional co-operation (between public authorities and interest groups) and the integration of policy (nature, environment, water and landscape). Subsidy applications will be assessed with respect to these aspects.
 - Subsidies will be granted on the basis of four-year programmes. The Government and provincial authorities will jointly assess submitted proposals.
 - Local landscape policy plans can form a good basis for the strengthening of landscape quality.
- In anticipation of the final regulation a number of trials will first be carried out under the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas in order test the concept of a network of green and blue in practice. Various methodologies and instruments will be used under the direction of the Provinces. In 2000 about six trial areas will be selected with the Provinces and the trials will start in 2001. The Government will supervise this process with a view to drafting the final regulation.

7. By 2010, a network of cycle paths and footpaths will have opened up the agrarian countryside.

- The opening up of the agrarian countryside will make it more attractive for recreation and thereby strengthen the public perception of agriculture.
- The Government will stimulate the opening up of the countryside with subsidies for long-distance footpaths, and the development of an interlacing network of green and blue.

- The Government will make agreements with the water authorities regarding recreational use on their property, for example opening up bank inspection paths. Recreational opportunities should go hand in hand with species protection.

Studies for a design project

Because of the shortage of space the dilemma between land use for economic purposes and the quality of green space is increasing, especially in the west of the Netherlands.

Until recently we have been trying to find whether there is any way to combine these functions. This is giving now way to the realisation that combinations of function simply have to be developed in places previously considered to be impossible. A smart design can link up demand (attractive projects, including clear nature development plans) and supply (favourable climate for business location). This can create a win-win situation: space for economic dynamics and nature, that can partially or wholly be supported by the new developments: for instance by public-private partnerships.

To study to what extent this is feasible the Government would like to carry out a number of design studies. These would have a double purpose: can functions be combined by means of creative design, and can the green functions within this design be financed wholly or partially from the new red functions?

The following considerations motivate the choice of study area:

- It has to be an area with a thriving economy.
- There have to be ambitious landscape and/or ecological plans.

Eligible areas may include:

- Areas where economic pressure is linked to existing infrastructure and where robust ecological corridors are needed or situated.
- Areas which may be restructured under the Pig Production Restructuring Act, for example to create a combination of agriculture and therapeutic functions, and which are marked for green and blue networks or afforestation.
- Areas where the development of an exclusive business park can be combined with the development of innovative nature design.
- Areas which require protection because of their unique landscape qualities, for example, openness, and where certain forms of activity could be combined with this.

The Government will take the initiative with a number of regions to include some of the design-driven studies in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning.

2.5 The Urban Area Programme (*Stedelijk Natuurlijk*)

The Urban Area Programme aims to stimulate the conservation and development of green space in and around cities. The scheme covers, roughly, the land in a radius of 5 to 10 kilometres around the built-up areas of cities with a population of at least 100,000. The scheme has a broader scope, however, in that it includes measures to increase public participation in local nature conservation and to link red and green developments. The scheme builds on *Visie Stadslandschappen* (1996).

2.5.1 Purpose of the programme

By 2020, the quality of the urban environment will be considerably improved due to the better quality of landscape and a larger, more attractive urban green space with ample recreational opportunities.

Objectives

1. Current policy calls for an additional 15,000 hectares of green space on the urban fringe, to be realised by 2020. Furthermore, the quality of these areas should be improved and urban dwellers should have easier access to them.
2. One of the strands of the new Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning is linking development with green space. This should result in 10,000 hectares of high-quality, functional green space on the urban fringe and a stronger urban green space network in the Randstad.

Quantitative targets

The targets below include nature areas, forests and landscapes as well as new recreational zones close to the cities. The target for expansion of the National Ecological Network is provisional. This target ultimately depends on the outcome of the parliamentary debate on the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning.

	Area (ha)	To be realised after 1-1-2000 (ha)
Urban green space in the Randstad	18,685	12,885
Green links in the Randstad	450 km	440 km
Green space outside the Randstad	3,000	2,320
	21,685	15,205
	10,000	10,000
Subtotal		
Urban landscapes quality boost ¹		
Total	31,685	25,205

¹ Provisional target. This target ultimately depends on the outcome of the parliamentary debate on the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning.

2.5.2 Why do we need an Urban Area Programme?

- Current policy has fallen short of our targets. The development of new green space in urban areas is lagging, while existing and proposed areas fail to meet modern citizens' needs. Accessible, attractive urban green space is an important determinant of urban quality of life.
- Green space will become even more scarce as cities expand onto greenfield land. Special attention should therefore be paid to maintaining or improving the quality of green space on the urban fringe.
- Attractive open areas in or near the major cities will enhance opportunities for recreation close to home and make them more attractive places to live and work. Fewer car miles and fewer people buying homes in the (suburban) countryside may result.
- A high quality urban green space network makes cities a more pleasant place to live and work, and attracts more businesses to locate.

2.5.3 Main points of the Programme

The Government's view is that urban development should be linked with green development. Urban green space networks should be realised with a high amenity value and ecological value. How these values are given shape is largely dependent on local wishes. Provincial and municipal governments probably know these wishes best, and should therefore have the task of organising public

participation in the policy-making process. The ultimate quality of urban green space networks will depend strongly on how seriously municipal councils take their task, and how effectively they manage to collaborate with other local and provincial authorities. Water boards should also be a party in green space development, as in many cases green and blue functions might be combined.

Between now and 2020, urban green space networks (including water) will need to be improved both qualitatively and quantitatively. Where areas fall short of existing targets, these shortcomings will need to be lifted. The main lines of urban green space policy are:

- Existing policy for urban green space will be continued: the green structure plan for the Randstad, afforestation near cities, and the implementation of urban regeneration projects with ISV/GIOS subsidies. By 2020, this should have resulted in 15,000 ha of new urban green space, which should provide some compensation for the enormous scale of housing development under the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and its amending act. However, the accessibility of these green areas – in terms of both right of way and transportation to and from the areas – may need to be improved.
- Possibilities should be explored for accelerating the realisation of the green structure plan for the Randstad, which right now is behind schedule. We shall also have to reassess whether existing land use plans and proposals are still in tune with new demands.
- The commodity value and accessibility of green space close to residential neighbourhoods can be improved by revising local plans. New local plans should at least prescribe the current ratio of hard to soft landscaping in built-up areas.
- The development of robust nature links will strengthen the National Ecological Network in the western part of the country and result in new green space in the Randstad.
- In an integral approach to urban planning, new housing and business developments should be linked with green developments. A national subsidy scheme will be introduced to stimulate linked development, especially for the period 2010-2020.
- Sustainable urban water management may be combined with nature. Optimal use should be made of the potential nature function of urban water systems.
- The creation of an interlacing network of green and blue in the agrarian countryside can also boost the quality of the greater urban landscape.

2.5.4 The Programme

Objectives	Targets
By 2020, an additional 15,000 hectares of green space on the urban fringe with higher amenity value and greater accessibility, on top of the 2000 base rate.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 2020, an additional 15,000 ha of green space on the urban fringe and 450 km of green links, on top of the 2000 base rate, through the implementation of current policy. 2. Improved recreational access and amenity value of the urban green space network. 3. The revision of local plans to improve accessibility and amenity value of city parks and create corridors to the countryside.
By 2020, an additional 10,000 hectares of amenity green space on the urban fringe and a stronger urban green space network in the Randstad, due to linked red and green development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. By 2020, an additional 10,000 ha of urban green space, on top of existing targets.

Below, we provide a detailed list of specific policy measures and activities planned by the Government.

1. By 2020, an additional 15,000 ha of green space on the urban fringe and 450 km of green links, on top of the 2000 base rate, through the implementation of current policy.

- Current targets for green space around the cities must be met in 2013 through continuation of existing national policy: the green structure plan for the Randstad, afforestation near cities, and the implementation of urban regeneration projects under ISV/GIOS.
- The Government, in collaboration with provincial and local authorities, will explore possibilities for accelerating the realisation of the green structure plan for the Randstad, as it is now behind schedule. Priority will be given to pilot projects in Haarlemmermeer, Haaglanden and Zoetermeer-Zuidplas. The Government will support the development of new partnerships that may accelerate the realisation of these and other projects.

- An inventory will be made of the green areas in and around 30 large cities to determine whether the current area of urban green space is sufficient. If necessary, new commitments will be laid down in the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas.

2. Improving recreational access and amenity value of the urban green space network.

- The Government and the major cities are studying whether existing and proposed plans for green space around the cities tie in with modern citizens' wishes.
- Each municipality will make a plan to improve the recreational access and value of urban green space.
- The authorities will seek ways to optimise the access and amenity value of urban green space, using the opportunities provided by current and new policy (linked development).
- Although municipalities are responsible for their own green space, the national Government will facilitate the improvement of the urban green space by providing knowledge, by assisting in process management for landscape development plans, by developing environmental education programmes focused on the urban situation, and awarding an annual municipal nature prize.
- Design and development oriented landscape strategies (see Rural Area Programme) will also be used in the countryside immediately surrounding the cities (urban landscapes).

3. The revision of local plans to improve accessibility and amenity value of city parks and create corridors to the countryside.

- Municipalities will use the opportunity provided by urban regeneration to boost the amenity value and accessibility of city parks and green space. Government funding for integral urban regeneration will depend in part on the inclusion of projects to improve urban green space.

4. By 2020, an additional 10,000 ha of urban green space, on top of existing targets.

- The Government favours an integral approach to planning, implementation and funding of red and green developments in order to boost the quality of the countryside in highly urbanised regions. Projected urban development in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning will be tied to investments in nature and landscape. This will comprise more than coherent and balanced planning; just as important are simultaneous realisation and a balanced use of available instruments. The Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and the Second Structure Plan for the Rural Areas are important in this respect. In these documents, the Government will also lay down new green space targets, tied to new development, for the period after 2010. Other levels of government and building contractors will be included in discussions about the type, scope and input of instruments. The Government's priority in this is to develop a sound funding structure for linked development projects.
- New land use designations will be required for 10,000 hectares (provisional) of additional green space, to be realised in the period 2010-2020 (see box). We shall explore the possibilities for financing this additional green area exclusively from new red functions. The Government's new land use policy, published in part one of the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning, will play an important role in the realisation of this additional green space.
- There is excellent potential for combining sustainable urban water management (retaining water and giving water a place in the cityscape) with nature. Municipalities and water boards bear the primary responsibility for utilising the various possibilities.
- More hard landscaping will require a proportional increase in water retention capacity. The area needed for water retention, usually on the urban fringe, could be used for nature and recreation.
- Strengthening of the National Ecological Network in the west of the Netherlands (primarily through the realisation of robust nature links) will have a spin-off effect on new high-quality green space in the Randstad urban network.

10,000 ha to enhance the urban landscape

We estimate that the regeneration of 10,000 hectares will be enough to boost the quality of the urban landscape as a whole. There are two explanations for this target.

In the update to the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning, the Government called for 2,800 ha of strategically located green space and corridors, which were to be linked with new housing development totalling 226,000 dwellings. The Government also prescribed 35 m² of green space in the greater region per new dwelling. All in all, this amounts to roughly 160 m² of green space in the urban fringe, per new dwelling.

Between now and 2020, 400,000 to 500,000 new dwellings and 10,000 to 17,500 hectares of business area will be built in addition to the V/NAC targets. We expect entrepreneurs to recognise the importance of green space for business location and to contribute to the realisation of new green space accordingly.

The target can also be explained along a different line. Research commissioned by the Ministry and carried out by Intomart revealed that, currently, about 200,000 hectares of land within 5 km of the boundaries of cities with a

population over 100,000 are considered by many people to be unattractive and dull. These landscapes could be improved to better meet urban dwellers' wishes, using an approach similar to the green and blue network in the Rural Area Programme. A countryside regeneration project would require redevelopment of 10% of the area concerned, as it has been shown that a sound landscape plan can boost the quality of 10 ha of landscape with only 1 hectare of redevelopment. This would raise the quality of these areas to the level of areas that did score well in the study. Through linked development, we could realise the regeneration of 100,000 hectares. This would require the redevelopment of 10,000 hectares.

In both cases, the realisation of high-quality green space should be combined where possible with new water management measures (necessitated by increased hard landscaping), in effect realising a combination of functions.

Urban regeneration provides new green opportunities

Major construction projects will change the face of the larger cities in the Netherlands in the years to come. Ambitious targets are set for new housing (laid down in *VINAC* and the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning), while at the same time urban regeneration projects are to give a much-needed facelift in many pre-war and post-war neighbourhoods. This process will involve new housing, higher-density housing and the development of new residential areas on brownfield land. It is important that the proportion of green space in and around the city is maintained, as accessible green areas close to home are vital to urban liveability. This can be monitored by making a regular balance of the urban green space, which should therefore be used in every urban regeneration process.

There are countless ways to improve the quality of the urban green space. For example, redevelopment in line with citizens' wishes, management that explicitly includes the preservation of ecological, heritage and landscape values, and a more visible role for water in the city.

3. Policy Instruments

An extensive set of instruments exists to implement nature policy: legislation, tax incentives and subsidies, as well as instruments to generate and pass on knowledge and boost public support. Traditionally, nature policy is embedded in legislation on the preservation of nature areas, landscapes and species, and in subsidy schemes for (co-) financing the acquisition, development and management of nature areas.

Effective instruments are adapted to the goals and strategies formulated in policy. This implies that policy instruments are adapted regularly to stay in tune with new developments. In this memorandum, we call for "nature for people and people for nature": nature policy with a broader scope and new, more goal-oriented partnerships, both of which necessitate a thorough overhaul of our current instruments. The process of change is already in full swing, witness the Management Programme. This new scheme is a good example of how subsidies can be streamlined in keeping with a more integrated approach to nature, forests and landscapes.

In this chapter, we discuss in detail the type of instruments necessary for the new nature policy and explain how the Government intends to realise these.

3.1 Principles

The management model for the rural area described in section 1.1 (*Clear division of tasks*) and the division of roles set out in that model between government and private sectors form the framework for this readjustment of policy instruments. More than in the past, the new set of instruments for nature policy must facilitate goal-oriented partnerships between government and private parties. Another important feature of the Government's new policy is that nature should become an integral factor in all decision-making processes which are likely to have an impact on nature. This means that there should be absolute clarity with respect to "what must be done" and sufficient leeway as to "what can be done". And the Government will have to stand firm when necessary and possible.

In recent years, different advisory councils and public interest organisations have already made concrete recommendations regarding instruments for specific aspects of nature policy¹. We have adopted some of these recommendations, for example to streamline protection schemes for the National Ecological Network, to strengthen the position of regional plans in rural area decision-making and to increase funding for robust nature links and landscapes (interlacing network of green and blue). This continues the gradual process towards a revised set of policy instruments which was initiated by the Management Programme.

Adjusting policy instruments is not easy. Next to practicalities, we need to review at a more fundamental level the suitability of existing instruments, mainly legislation and subsidy schemes, and determine how they could be adapted to efficiently support nature policy with a broader scope in the longer term. In this respect, we will also have to examine whether the instruments used in other policy fields facilitate or impede the implementation of nature policy.

The Government's priority at this time is to pave the way for a more fundamental change in policy implementation. The necessary steps are:

- Legislation concerning the implementation of landscape and nature conservation should be unambiguous and transparent. It is vital that the EU Wild Bird and Habitat Directives are embedded in national legislation soon. The Government will also study how it may harmonise and simplify conservation measures for the remaining parts of the National Ecological Network and forests.
- The Government shall examine the possibility of clustering national subsidies for area-specific development following the principles of the rural area management model.
- Goal-oriented and area-specific partnerships will boost the quality of nature and landscapes. The Government will stimulate design-driven planning and strive to integrate nature concerns in other ministries' policy plans and decisions.

¹ Including reports by the Council for the Rural Areas (*Natuurbeleid dat verder gaat* and *Grondbeleid voor groene functies*, both published in 1999) and KPMG (*Grond voor natuur*, 1999).

- Various subsidy schemes will be established for education, extension and research aimed specifically at increasing public support for the Government's nature policy.
- "Green" tax incentives will stimulate nature management activities by private parties. The Government will study the feasibility of other, more ambitious measures to supplement those already described in the "green paper".

These actions are described in more detail in the remaining sections of this chapter.

3.2 Protecting areas and species

3.2.1 Protecting nature areas

The Structure Plan for the Rural Areas lays down the protection of areas in the National Ecological Network according to the "no, unless..." principle. European rules for conservation laid down in Article 6 of the Habitat Directive must be applied in areas designated by the EU Wild Birds and Habitat Directives. In the Netherlands' opinion, which was explained to the European Commission during the designation of protected areas for the Wild Birds Directive, the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas and Article 6 of the Habitat Directive afford the same degree of protection.

To improve the clarity, transparency, harmonisation and practical feasibility of conservation measures, the Government intends to realise physical protection as follows:

- For areas designated under the Wild Birds and Habitat Directives, a protection scheme will be developed as described in the inset and embedded in national legislation (Nature Conservation Act) as required by EU legislation.
- With respect to other, non-designated areas in the National Ecological Network and forests currently protected by the Forest Act, the Government will assess whether they should be protected in the same way or whether they could be sufficiently protected by key planning decisions and zoning plans.
- With respect to the remaining areas, the Government will assess the necessity of applying the precautionary principle as described in the inset.

Clarity, transparency and better feasibility are important criteria for protection measures for this third category of nature area. In addition, protection should not present new and unnecessary obstacles to important developments in society. This assessment will be made by the Government on the basis of information provided by the ministries concerned and by professional advisors.

The protection of areas designated in the Wild Birds Directive and the Habitat Directive

A series of measures has been laid down in the Structure Plan for the Rural Areas, which according to the Government is in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitat Directive. The measures consist of:

1. basic protection
2. "no, unless" considerations (alternatives, use and needs analysis)
3. precautionary principle
4. external effects
5. compensation

The protection scheme:

I. Nature areas are afforded a level of basic protection on the basis of the precautionary principle that states that existing features and nature values must be preserved.

II. If there are plans for human activity within or outside a designated area and characteristic features and values are:

- A. not affected: the activity is permitted subject to appropriate assessment by the competent authorities.
- B. affected: the activity is not permitted, unless... (see ad. B) (the precautionary principle applies; if there are any doubts as to the nature of the effects, a "no, unless" analysis is made).

Ad B.

Activities for which there are feasible alternatives or which lack an overriding public interest will not be allowed.

If feasible alternatives do not exist but the activity must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest then the activity might be carried out after careful consideration of all the interests at stake (nature versus other).

If an activity is allowed, then compensatory measures should be decided on before the activity commences.

Compensatory measures should meet the following demands:

- No net loss of nature value.
- Compensation in the immediate vicinity.
- If physical compensation is impossible, compensation with nature values of equal worth.
- If physical compensation and compensation with nature values of equal worth are both impossible, financial compensation for other nature projects.
- Information about specific compensatory measures should be provided when the decision is announced.
- Compensation should be realised during the period that said activity is carried out.

The Habitat Directive prescribes that the precautionary principle must be followed and compensatory measures made.

The Government stresses that the protection of designated areas should encompass more than words only. We shall monitor and if necessary enforce conservation in these areas.

3.2.2 The preservation of species

The preservation of species is laid down in the Flora and Fauna Act and the Nature Conservation Act. The Netherlands is bound by European legislation and by several international agreements to make wise use of natural resources and to conserve wild flora and fauna in their natural habitats. The Netherlands interprets the latter obligation as applying to native species occurring in the Netherlands in 1982, the year the Bern Convention was ratified.

In addition, the Netherlands is required under CITES, the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild flora and fauna, to monitor the trade in protected species.

3.3 Contributing to the acquisition, development and management of nature

Nature, forests and landscapes must be managed in an economically feasible, sustainable manner. Landowners can apply for various subsidies to help make this possible. Over the years, a wide variety of loose measures has been introduced for the acquisition, development and protection of both areas and species, for regional restructuring and water management. Nature management organisations qualifying for subsidies include the National Forest Service, *Domeinen* (Service of Public Lands), the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management and the Ministry of Defence. The two primary sets of measures are *Subsidieregelingen Natuurbeheer 2000* and *Agrarisch Natuurbeheer*. This memorandum also introduces new measures to develop robust nature links and boost the quality of the landscape.

Instruments for the acquisition, development and management of areas and species

Acquisition

1. Land acquisition for the State
2. Scheme for private nature conservation organisations (*Regeling Particuliere terreinbeherende natuurbeschermingsorganisaties*)
 - sub-scheme acquisition of land
 - sub-scheme nature development

Development/Investment

1. *Stimuleringskader*
 - *Regeling demonstratieprojecten markt en concurrentiekracht*
 - *Investeringsregeling markt en concurrentiekracht*
 - *Stimuleringsregeling innovatie markt en concurrentiekracht*
 - *Investeringsprojecten verwerking en afzet bosbouwproducten*
 - *Bijdrageregeling demonstratie- en bewustmakingsprojecten milieu - en natuurvriendelijke landbouwproductiemethoden*
 - *Regeling stimulering biologische productiemethode*
 - *Milieu en economie*
 - *Stimuleringsregeling vernieuwing landelijk gebied*
2. Reconstruction of the sandy soil areas (ICES)
3. Wet landscapes (ICES) (including acquisition)
4. Spatial planning
 - Subsidies for waterworks
 - Water management and access A2 (including A2 EHS)
 - Access

- Development of recreational areas
 - Environmental measures
 - Planting of forests, planning of reserves and nature development areas
 - Reparcellation scheme *Regeling kavelruil* (Government Service for Land and Water Management)
5. *Stimuleringsregeling gebiedsgericht beleid 2000* (SGB2000, including Valuable Man-made Landscapes)
 6. *Stimuleringsfonds Belvedere*
 7. *Beëindigingsregeling varkensbedrijven in de EHS (BEVAR)*
 8. *Regeling bijdragen Publiek-private samenwerking (PPS)*
 9. *Regeling subsidiëring Kwaliteit Groene Hart*
 10. *Regeling Versterking recreatie*
 11. *Kaderregeling Subsidiëring natuurprojecten*
 - *Besluit ontwikkeling van landschappen (BOL)*
 - *Besluit behoud historische buitenplaatsen*
 - *Besluit natuur in en om stad*

Area and species management

1. Management of public lands by the National Forest Service
2. Management of public land by *Domeinen*, Public Works and Water Management and the Ministry of Defence
3. *Subsidieregeling Natuurbeheer 2000*
4. *Subsidieregeling Agrarisch Natuurbeheer*
5. *Subsidieregeling zeldzame landbouwhuisdierrassen*
6. *Kaderregeling subsidiëring natuurprojecten*
 - *Besluit versterking natuur- en bosbeheer bij bos en landgoederen*
 - *Besluit landelijke activiteiten soortenbescherming*
 - *Besluit voorkoming verbossing rietlanden*
 - *Besluit instandhouding landschapselementen (BIL)*
 - *Besluit behoud historische buitenplaatsen*
 - *Besluit natuur in en om stad*
 - *Besluit ontwikkeling van landschappen (landschaps(beleids)plannen)(BOL)*
7. *Regeling subsidies nationale en grensoverschrijdende parken*
8. *Natuurbeschermingswet (beheer)*
9. *Jachtfonds (ganzenbeheer)*
10. *Regeling tegemoetkomingen Jachtfonds*
11. *Regeling Gebiedsgerichte Bestrijding Verdroging (GEBEVE)*
12. *Regeling natuurbraaksubsidie*
13. *Regeling subsidies achterstallig onderhoud historische parken, tuinen en buitenplaatsen.*

The provincial governments will have a new, larger role in the implementation of nature policy, which will become an integral part of area-specific policy. The success of integrated policy will depend strongly on streamlined, clustered schemes. At this time, two clustered subsidy schemes already exist (*Natuurbeheer 2000* and *Agrarisch Natuurbeheer*). Another clustered measure, SGB 2000 (*Subsidieregeling gebiedsgericht beleid en reconstructie*), is in the make. As laid down in the rural area management model, the national government will remain responsible for the application of above-mentioned schemes and will be accountable to the European Union with respect to the choice of instruments.

Decision-making processes in the Management Programme have taught us not to underestimate the complexity of streamlining and clustering operations. In the light of this, we have decided against a sweeping, all-encompassing operation in favour of gradual streamlining. The following activities will be carried out in the years to come.

- The Land Development Act will be amended and renamed the Rural Area Development Act. This Act should remove unnecessary procedural delays and facilitate an integral and area-specific approach to rural area development. The Act will include a package of subsidies for the development of nature and landscapes.
- The Government will continue to streamline subsidy schemes between now and 2005.
- New government investments in nature management (for the realisation of robust nature links and the improvement of landscape quality) will, for now, be channelled using existing schemes, in particular *Natuurbeheer 2000*.
- A separate subsidy scheme will be developed to fund independent assessments of the quality of landscape plans made at both national and provincial levels and to stimulate the development of design-driven landscape strategies.

3.4 Stimulating goal-oriented partnerships

In this memorandum, we stress the need for goal-oriented partnerships with all parties involved in the implementation of nature policy. In fact, this is one of the spearheads of policy, born of the conviction that good collaboration is a crucial factor in effective development and management of (new) nature areas. The Government will stimulate goal-oriented partnerships in a number of ways.

- The Government will consult provincial and municipal authorities to stimulate public-private partnerships towards a National Landscape. Close collaboration is especially crucial in regions with considerable existing or potential landscape value, but which are under pressure of recreation and urbanisation, for example *Hoekse Waard* and *Groene Hart*. The Government expressly rejects the idea of introducing a separate category of protection, preferring instead regional collaborations (see the Rural Area Programme).
- Design-driven planning should result in broad public alliances aimed at improving the 'green' quality of the rural areas. Supervision at the national level will be of a general nature and be based on substantive and process criteria, as laid down in Rural Area Programme. Such alliances will become an important criterion for government funding. Design-driven planning will be implemented experimentally in four areas/projects. Similar procedures will apply for subsidies tied to the Memorandum on architectural policy for 2001-2004.
- The Government will encourage partnerships in red and green development. Ideally, red and green development should be linked in spatial plans, especially in areas (identified in the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning) targeted for large-scale housing development. Opportunities for funding by private parties will be explored.

3.5 Knowledge, education and increasing public support

The implementation of nature policy has implications for many people and parties. These stakeholders include professional site management and planning organisations directly involved in implementation, as well as concerned citizens. Professional stakeholders need knowledge and skills in order to carry out their task adequately. Citizens' concerns tend to focus on the condition of Dutch nature areas and public access. Information must be made available to all interested parties. The Government therefore aims to achieve a high standard of research, education and extension, which may cause a spin-off to active involvement by the public in nature conservation work.

Subsidies for research, education and extension will be aimed at increasing public support for nature management and raising the effectiveness of such management. Policy measures and activities to achieve these objectives are listed below.

1. Environmental education will be continued, but its focus will shift from ecological education to learning about sustainability.

- Environmental education will continue to be an important instrument for transferring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Environmental education increases individuals' understanding, interest and involvement in nature.
- The programme '*Leren voor Duurzaamheid*' is a joint effort by various ministries, provincial authorities, the Federation of Water Boards, and the Union of Dutch Local Authorities to overhaul environmental education. Under the new theme of sustainability, environmental educational programmes will focus on the interdependence of ecology, economy and society. New target groups for educational programmes may be found in the private and public sector. The administrative structure of environmental education will be strengthened. Dfl. 38 million will be spent over the next four years to realise all this.
- Environmental education will become more important in school curricula. Strategies are being developed to teach children the value of nature and to instil in them a love of nature.
- Environmental education programmes will be used as a communications and/or process instrument to implement aspects of nature policy (extension, increasing public support and involvement).
- *Versterking Maatschappelijke Betekenis Natuur* is a subsidy scheme for organisations in education, extension, vision development and network development. The effectiveness of the measure will be evaluated in 2001.

2. Nature will continue to be an important theme in school curricula.

- Educational programmes should address such matters as the integration of nature, forests, landscapes and recreation, and the increasing influence of socio-economic factors on site management. In addition to practical, topical knowledge, programmes can be enriched by:
 - courses on integrating different management strategies (ecological, economic, social) in comprehensive terrain management.
 - partnerships between the sector and agricultural schools with respect to nature and landscape management.
 - courses on multifunctional land-use in practice (combination of functions).
 - new communication skills to be used in new, more intensive interactions between landowners or site managers and the direct community.

3. *Research into land management will be enriched with new output-oriented themes.*

- Factual, technical know-how will be complemented with social science subjects. Socio-economic and cultural dimensions should play a bigger role in research. Administrative and integral themes in relation to the changing economy and the quality of the rural areas should be included in new research programmes. Specifically, research should be conducted into
 - the possibilities for area-specific collaborations and new alliances.
 - financial aspects of terrain management.
 - interdisciplinary solutions from a design-driven perspective.
 - how nature fulfils certain societal needs.
- Site management should become more professional; more effective and efficient management methods must be developed, monitored and evaluated.
- A separate line of research will be launched for the role of ICT in terrain management and knowledge dissemination.
- Research into sustainable management of forests and nature under an increasing environmental burden and increasing urbanisation shall be intensified. Special attention will be given to the impact of climate change on (the management of) nature and forests.

4. *The knowledge network for nature management will be reinforced between now and 2010.*

- The Government will review how the knowledge infrastructure for nature may be made more effective and accessible. Our particular concern is making knowledge available for policy implementers, such as other government bodies, site managers and (economic) parties.
- The functioning of regional knowledge centres (and knowledge brokers) must be improved. These centres must become knowledge marketplaces, bringing together researchers and the users of research. Existing expertise and innovation networks will play a role in this.
- Site management research will be driven by several parties, including (new) representatives from public interest groups and private parties.
- A new proposal will lay down the possibilities for improving access to and the acquisition of essential knowledge generated by the different disciplines involved in an area-specific approach.
- We will study the feasibility of establishing a knowledge and information network studying the urban – green relationship, especially as regards the urban green space.

5. *Demand-driven information to current and future site managers.*

- Site management should become more professional (this applies equally to site management organisations, farmers and other private parties). Specifically, the following aspects need to be improved: operational management, cost management, accountability of expenses, accountability of employed management methods, opportunities for outdoor recreation, overall results. It is important that parties continue to receive information about nature management and policy, but the selection of information should become more demand-driven.
- Next to traditional extension services, intermediaries such as environmental cooperatives and forest groups will become important sources of information.
- Collaborations between educational institutes and extension services will be encouraged.

3.6 Tax incentives and broader funding

Those carrying out nature management qualify for a number of tax incentives.

- Woods and nature areas with public access and listed in the Estates Act get dispensation from inheritance tax.
- Tax incentive for investors in approved environmental projects.
- Dispensation from income tax for income from forestry and nature management.
- Dispensation from property taxes for forests and nature areas owned by legal bodies.

These measures will continue.

Tax incentives for environmental projects are an effective method of stimulating nature management by private parties. The Government recently announced several new “green” tax measures and will review the possibilities for even more measures.

1. *The following steps are scheduled between now and 2002.*

- Amendment to the Estates Act to include other nature areas in addition to woodland.
- Eligibility for the farmers’ tax reduction for sustainable entrepreneurship will be broadened.
- Inclusion of a fiscal construction for CO₂ certificates in the energy tax scheme.
- Review of the feasibility of a tax on surface extraction of natural resources, with revenues being channelled back to the sector.
- Eligibility for dispensation from property taxes broadened to include nature areas owned by private persons.

2. *The following measures will be considered between now and 2005.*

- A tax on wood not produced in a sustainable manner.
- A tax incentive for farmers who give walkers access on their land.
- The positive and negative effects of nature areas on water management discounted in water duties.
- Introduction of a “green tax” according to the user-pays principle, being charged to those who have an interest in the preservation of nature and landscape. Similar to the water duties system.
- The use of tax measures to realise nature and landscape goals connected with land policy.

3. *Between now and 2005, new possibilities for funding of nature and landscape by market parties will be explored.*

- The water sector may be able to contribute to nature conservation in the form of financial investment or actual management, as this sector benefits, economically, from nature.
- Entrepreneurs in the tourist and recreation sector may be able to contribute to nature conservation in the form of investment or actual management, as this sector benefits economically from nature. To some extent, this is already the case in and around the Veluwe.
- Income from forestry may be increased by financially supporting projects proposed by the Luteijn Commission.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

4.1 Collecting information, monitoring and evaluation

The collection of information for and the monitoring and evaluation of policy for nature, forests and landscapes are a responsibility of the national government. The Government primarily concerns itself with gathering information and monitoring with a view to policy development, implementation and evaluation at the national level, and accountability of national funds.

Collaborations with other levels of government and public interest organisations are desirable for the tasks of information collection and monitoring. Volunteers and site managers are important providers of information. These individuals, and the organisations that coordinate their actions, are long-term partners in information collection and monitoring. These partners, and all stakeholders, are consulted with respect to the development of effective and coherent monitoring networks for nature, forests and landscapes which provide fundamental information for policy evaluation and adjustment. There are monitoring networks for biodiversity, the quality of the National Ecological Network, the landscape and for the way that nature and landscape fulfil their assigned functions. The entire set of monitoring networks will be operational by 2005.

The information collected should be made available to all stakeholders. If necessary, the costs of access and processing may be passed on to users. Preferably, information will be passed on using new media, such as the Internet.

4.2 Reports by the Nature Assessment Bureau

The Nature Assessment Bureau is charged with identifying, evaluating and exploring developments in nature policy. It is an independent agency under the National Institute of Public Health and Environmental Protection (RIVM), whose partners include DLO-NL and the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management. The Nature Assessment Bureau receives its funding and its research commissions from the Government, on the basis of multi-year plans between the ministries concerned and implementing organisations. The Nature Assessment Bureau's performance is evaluated periodically. The first evaluation was made in 2000 and results are expected in 2001.

The Nature Assessment Bureau is responsible for the publication of the annual Nature Balance Report, which states whether policy is being implemented adequately and according to schedule and gives reasons why implementation might be delayed. A National Nature Management Outlook is published every four years. The Outlook evaluates the progress made in policy implementation and describes relevant longer term developments. Work on the Nature Balance Report and the Nature Management Outlook is scheduled such that the results can be used for interim adjustments to nature policy.

In addition to these publications, the Nature Assessment Bureau is also called on to evaluate the effectiveness of policy alternatives with respect to the Government's policy objectives. It is currently conducting such evaluations for the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning and ICES (the Interministerial Committee on Economic Structure Policy).

The Nature Assessment Bureau's periodic reports (Nature Balance Report and Nature Management Outlook) always contain the following subjects:

- tendencies in the development of nature (biodiversity) and landscapes (character)
- the functions of nature and landscapes (economic/ecological considerations, exploitation of nature and landscapes by different sectors, combination of functions)
- environmental factors (the influence of human activities on environmental, water, spatial and management aspects)
- social and societal aspects (public support, amenity value, trickle-down effect at different levels of government)

Starting in 2001, the Nature Assessment Bureau will use standardised measures to report on these subjects. The chosen measures will meet scientific standards of validity and reliability, and will reflect the broader scope of new nature policy, as presented in this memorandum.

The measures will help us to determine whether the Netherlands is fulfilling its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention, including agri-biodiversity.

4.3 Reports by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries will report on the progress in policy implementation in its annual budget, primarily in the form of basic indicators. The budget report will also include a summary of the results achieved 'in the field' with the various programme subsidies, and a list of proposed performance targets to be agreed on with the implementing organisations, the Government Service for Land and Water Management and *Laser*.

A programme is being developed to evaluate the effectiveness of policy instruments on a regular basis, at least once every eight years. The programme will be ready for use in 2001.

Finally, in accordance with the Nature Conservation Act, the policy contained in this memorandum will be evaluated in 2008 at the latest. Interim policy adjustments will be made four years from now.

Glossary

Below, we provide translations of Government policy documents and schemes that are regularly cited in this document Nature for people, people for nature.

<i>Bosbeleidsplan</i>	Forest Policy Plan
<i>Boswet</i>	Forest Act
<i>Commissie Waterbeheer 21^e eeuw</i>	Commission for Water Management in the 21st Century
<i>Integrale Visie IJsselmeergebied</i>	Integral Vision Plan for the IJsselmeer region
<i>ICES</i>	Inter-ministerial Committee on Economic Structure Policy
<i>ICES instruments</i>	Subsidy schemes for the implementation of policy developed by ICES
<i>ISV/GIOS</i>	Government subsidy scheme for urban regeneration projects
<i>Nota Kracht en Kwaliteit</i>	Memorandum on Strength and Quality
<i>Natuurbalans</i>	Nature Balance Report (annual)
<i>Natuurverkenning</i>	Nature Management Outlook (published every 4 years)
<i>Natuurbeleidsplan</i>	Nature Policy Plan
<i>Nota Landschap</i>	Landscape Memorandum
<i>Nota Ruimtelijk Economisch Beleid</i>	Memorandum on Economic Physical Planning Policy
<i>Nota Belvedere</i>	Belvedere Memorandum on cultural heritage and physical planning
<i>Startnota Ruimtelijke Ordening</i>	Memorandum on Physical Planning
<i>Strategisch Plan van Aanpak Biodiversiteit</i>	Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity
<i>Tweede Structuurschema Groene Ruimte</i>	Second structure plan for the rural areas (to be published in 2001)
<i>Vierde Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan</i>	Fourth National Environmental Policy Plan
<i>Vierde Nota Waterhuishouding</i>	Fourth Memorandum on Water Management
<i>Vijfde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening</i>	Fifth Memorandum on Spatial Planning
<i>VINEX</i>	Fourth Memorandum on Physical Planning
<i>VINAC (VINEX Actualisatie)</i>	New target for housing development amending original VINEX targets
<i>Visie Stadslandschappen</i>	Forest and Nature Survival Plan
<i>Voedsel en Groen</i>	Food Production and Rural Areas
<i>Waterhuishouding in het Natte Hart</i>	Water management in the greater IJsselmeer region