

The lowdown on drought

Some welcome rain fell in a few places on Saturday, but in general, it is once again extremely dry in the Netherlands. *Resource* phoned up Floris Lafeber, a Master's student of Meteorology and an assistant meteorologist at Weeronline.

What's going on that it's so dry again?

'Our region has had a succession of high-pressure areas for a while now. That makes for calm, dry spring weather and means disturbances from the Atlantic Ocean hardly get the chance to reach us. It will stay that way for the time being, with a new high-pressure area coming in after the weekend.'

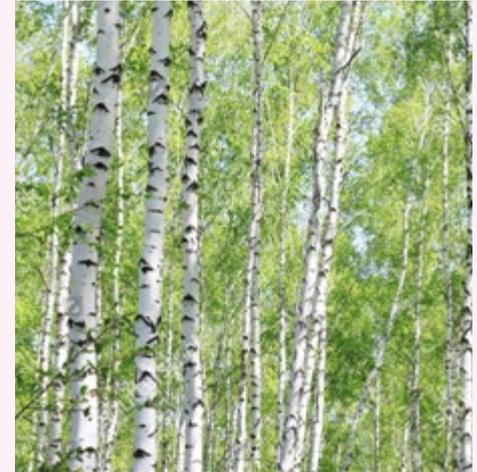
Is that good or bad news?

'That depends on who you ask. Personally, I like the weather very much, partly because I am currently training for the Nijmegen 4Days Marches, so I'm doing a lot of walking. But hay fever sufferers and farmers are defi-

nately not happy with it. Especially as the wind is going to pick up. Pollen spreads more easily then, and the topsoil dries out more quickly.'

Isn't this stable spring weather extremely boring for a meteorologist?

'It's not that bad! At Weeronline, where I've been working as an assistant meteorologist for three and a half years now, it's actually really busy right now: around the first summer day in the Netherlands – when the temperature in De Bilt exceeds 25 degrees – there's always plenty of media attention. We also report a lot of information about the strength of the sun, which is currently quite high, at 5 to 6. And *Resource* is not the only one with questions about the drought. Unusual things are also happening elsewhere. The extreme heatwave in India and Pakistan, with temperatures of over 50 degrees, is really remarkable.'



In dry spring weather, pollen (from the birch, for instance) stays in the air longer. Bad news for people with hay fever • Photo Shutterstock

Is this your favourite kind of weather?

'To be honest, what I love best is extreme cold. As soon as the temperature drops below -10, my heart starts beating faster.' ME