

Minister also goes for two-tier approach to nitrogen issue

Nitrogen minister Christianne van der Wal announced more details about the government's nitrogen plans on Friday. Resource asked Tia Hermans, chair of WUR's Taskforce Integrated Regional Approach, to comment.

Farmers think the minister is still too vague. Do you agree?

'I understand their reaction; the letter gives an initial indication and it isn't clear what this means for an individual farm. It still doesn't say what measures are needed to achieve the nitrogen targets. That will be the real challenge.'

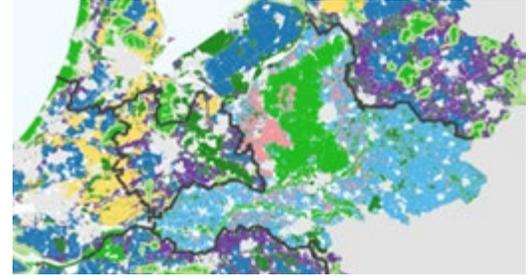
That is now up to the provinces?

'The minister says a combination of generic and area-specific measures are needed — precisely what we said in our nitrogen roadmap. But the provinces need to know what the generic policy is likely to be in order to figure out what area-spe-

cific measures to take, because the generic policy has different effects on different areas. To give an example, if the protein content of cattle feed is reduced, that will have a bigger effect in areas with a lot of dairy cows.'

What does this letter mean for the Nitrogen Taskforce?

'Our taskforce takes the integrated targets as its starting point — not just the nitrogen targets but also the climate objectives and the targets in the Water Framework Directive, because they are interconnected. The minister mentions that integrated aspect, but her letter only deals with the nitrogen targets. We will continue to investigate what sets of measures are required to achieve the targets in combination, while playing with the mix of area-specific and generic measures. We will also look at how farms fit in. Because just as provinces have to



The emission reduction chart from the minister's letter.
Illustration Ministry of Agriculture

satisfy the national objectives, so farms have to stay within the provincial limits — and the impact differs depending on the type of farm. That is why we look at the socio-economic impact of the various sets of measures. To some extent these are questions the ministry and provinces are asking, but it's also partly our own line of research. This is how we try to keep the big picture in view.' ^{ME}