

## Axis 4 Factsheet: Netherlands

### Geographical map: The Netherlands



#### 1. Context in which Axis 4 is being developed and main challenges faced.

While the North Sea coastline of the Netherlands extends to over 1270 km, from the perspective of the national economy, the fisheries sector (production & processing) is of limited importance (<0.3 % of the GDP). The value of exports of fish and fish products, however, represents approximately 0.6% of total Dutch exports. Moreover, the Netherlands has a positive trade balance in fisheries products, as the country provides an essential processing and logistics centre for seafood in Europe. Fish consumption in the Netherlands was estimated to be around 19.2 kg/capita/year in 2005, compared to the European average of 21 kg/capita/year<sup>1</sup>.

The professional fisheries sector consists of both marine and inland fisheries and aquaculture. This sector provides direct employment for about 9 000 people (0.1% of the active population), 24% being based in the Flevoland province (the new polders East of Amsterdam). Marine fisheries are the most important sub sector in the Dutch fishing industry and are mostly located in the North Sea and the north-eastern part of the Atlantic Ocean. In 2008, the Dutch sea fishing fleet numbered around 800 vessels, with a total capacity of 147 000 GT and around 340 000 Kw of power, making it a small fleet in terms of the number of vessels (less than 1% of the total number of EU vessels) but a large one in terms of tonnage and power (representing respectively 8% and 5% of the total EU tonnage and power<sup>1</sup>). The distant water fleet represents the vast majority of the volumes landed (80% of the total 470 000 tonnes landed), but the value of landings mostly comes from the coastal fleet, which represents 60% of the €360 million value of landings. Total volume of landings by the coastal and distant water fleet was 100 000 tonnes and 368 000 tonnes respectively (source: Operational Programme). In the coastal fishery sector, increasing attention is being paid to the relationship between fishing activities and the ecological value of the environment (source: Operational Programme). Where productive and ecological functions of the coastal area are mutually exclusive, a separation between the functions is established, leading to the closure of specific areas for fishing.

Inland fisheries areas in the Netherlands are limited. Professional fisheries produced a total of around 2 000 tonnes in 2007, with a value of €15.5 million. Around 70% of revenues originated from the severely threatened eel fisheries.

Aquaculture in the Netherlands is dominated by mussel farming on designated grounds in the delta of Zeeland and the Wadden Sea, where the town of Yerseke is often described as the "mussel capital". This sector has faced a 50% drop in production since the mid-nineties but it still has 56 active ships, provides employment for around 190 people and produces around 37 000 tonnes of mussels per year, representing a total value of some €66 million. Processing and distribution to traditional markets is well organised, but the sector is under increasing pressure to move towards more environment friendly methods of production, especially with regard to the collection of mussel seeds, which often takes place in designated Natura 2000 areas. Off-bottom mussel farms, including the use of mussel spat collectors, which leave the sea bed untouched, is a recent and important development in Dutch coastal waters, partly supported by the EFF.

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat 2008

Freshwater fish farming is also limited in the Netherlands. Around 40 companies are active in this area, producing about 7 000 tonnes annually, representing a value of €20 million. The sector focuses mainly on African and hybrid catfish and eel (4 000 and 3 000 tonnes respectively in 2009) farmed in closed recirculation systems. A recent decline in the number of farms and in production is linked to market developments, high production costs and a lack of cooperation between partners in the food industry, combined with complex relations between industry and research institutes. Presently, the industry is working with the government to analyse the situation and prepare a strategic action plan.

## 2. The national response in terms of Axis 4

In the early nineties, fisheries policies in the Netherlands were reviewed and adjusted, transferring management responsibilities to the sector itself, within a framework set by the Government. Axis 4 is seen by the authorities as an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between economic actors in fisheries areas and to introduce change in the sector. One of the priorities is to establish a minimum of one FLAG per coastal province. As to the implication of the fisheries sector in terms of territorial development, the implementation of Axis 4 is coordinated by the *Ministry of Economic Relations, Agriculture & Innovation* in its function as Managing Authority (MA). For the day to day issues, the MA works in close cooperation with the *Bestuurlijk Platform Visserijgemeenschappen* (BPV; Platform of Fisheries Communities) set up by the Provinces and Municipalities. The BPV has a consultative status only, without being registered as an organisation. It includes administrative representatives of 28 fishing communities (mayors or councillors) and 6 provinces (deputies). It meets at least three times a year and discusses aspects of fisheries and the fish chain from a socio-economic perspective (often with a focus on employment and growth of the fisheries sector). The BPV communicates between stakeholders groups and the central government. It monitors regulations and developments and, on special request, it formulates proposals for cooperative initiatives. The coordination of contacts between the provinces and communities and producer organisations, political parties and NGOs is carried out by the secretary and the chairman.

## 3. The areas and their key characteristics

The six coastal Provinces<sup>2</sup> (Flevoland, Friesland, Groningen, Noord-Holland, Zeeland, Zuid-Holland) involved in fisheries activities played a key role in the process of fisheries areas definition and Group selection, as the provinces have well defined responsibilities in relation to socio-economic development in the Netherlands.



Province	FLAG	Map colour	Population	Area (land; km <sup>2</sup> )	Area (water; km <sup>2</sup> )
Groningen	Homeland	Green	133 830	984,42	623,510
Fryslân	Fryslân	Purple	128 997	1107,31	2199,79
Flevoland	Urk	Red	18 062	98,37	11,53
Noord-Holland	Noordwest Holland	Blue	145 982	478,04	872,87
Zeeland	Zeeland	Orange	47 860	928,73	883,04
Zuid-Holland	Zuid-Hollandse Delta	Yellow	91 856	272,39	186,04

Source: [www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl) and FLAG strategies; dates as per 01-01-2009

<sup>2</sup> In the Netherlands the NUTS II areas coincide with the administrative areas of the Provinces.

#### 4. The selection process

A general call for expressions of interest was launched by the MA, to which six provinces (NUTS II administrative subdivision) responded, with proposals for six fisheries areas (one in each province). This pre-selection focused on areas with a maximum of 150 000 inhabitants (smaller than NUTS III administrative areas, which are also referred to as COROP areas in the Netherlands<sup>3</sup>). Criteria for selection were:

- the presence of small fisheries communities;
- the presence of active fishermen and fleet that are dependent on fisheries;
- the presence of an active fish auction;
- a contribution to employment generation (with due attention to balanced gender relations).

The selection of the six areas proposed by the Provinces was approved by the MA in a single step in mid 2008. Provisional groups were then formed by active members of the local communities in the selected areas. The groups then drafted their strategies, which were ultimately approved by the Provinces. Subsequently, the first FLAGs were approved by the MA in August 2009.

The experience of the Provinces with LEADER was put to good use and it also allowed the FLAGs to link in with existing development strategies. This also enables the efficient and effective use of relatively limited funds for administrative purposes.

In practice, the administrative management of the different projects is delegated to the *Dienst Regelingen (DR)*; National Regulations Agency), which is one of the MA's administrative agencies and acts as an intermediate body of the MA.

#### 5. The strategies

The national strategy in the context of the EFF is translated in the Operational Programme 2007-2013, called *Perspectief voor een duurzame visserij* (Perspective for a sustainable fishery).

The challenges for the FLAGs are described in their strategies. They all fit within the EFF framework and the Operational Programme of the Netherlands. The fisheries sector in Flevoland, Noord-Holland, Zeeland and Zuid-Holland is characterised by fishing on a larger scale than Friesland and Groningen. Therefore, the degree of organisation of the sector in the latter is lower and, therefore, requires a greater effort to ensure the active participation of the ultimate target groups. The BPV acts as a monitoring body for the assessment of the local strategies.

#### 6. The groups

Six local groups have been selected as FLAGs, covering fisheries areas in the six Provinces. Four were approved as FLAGs (Flevoland, Groningen, Noord-Holland and Zeeland) based on their response to the first tender (open from 1 - 31 January 2010). The other two FLAGs (Friesland, Zuid-Holland) were approved in January 2011, based on the third tender in December 2010. FLAGs are not registered as legal bodies. However, they bring together representatives of the most important stakeholder groups (organisations with a direct involvement in fisheries, relevant government bodies (e.g. municipalities, Province), civil society organisations such as those involved in nature and the environment) in the area. Therefore, they are officially recognised by the MA as groups with decision-making power, as specified in the Operational Programme of the Netherlands.

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<sup>3</sup> COROP comes from Coördinatie Commissie Regionaal OnderzoeksProgramma (Coordination Commission Regional Research Programme (started in 1971). A COROP area is characterised by a central node (e.g. a town) that has basic servicing functions to its surrounding area like education, live/work, medical care.

## 7. Key features of administrative and financial systems

### EFF budget 2007-2013

% of EFF Budget on Axis 4	EFF Budget on Axis 4 /€	National funding /€	Total Budget /€	Average Budget per group /€	Number of Groups
10.3%	5 000 000	5 000 000 + 1 080 117 <sup>4</sup>	10 000 000 + 1 080 117	1 666 667 2 746 784 (Zeeland)	6

The Provinces provide the national co-funding through a “global grant” to implement the selected local strategies established by the FLAGS. The Provinces could increase the national budget and double the amount made available to the groups. They also have the final responsibility for the implementation of Axis 4 objectives on the ground.

## 8. Networking and capacity building

The project leaders employed by the Provinces (PPL; provincial project leader), which are responsible for providing support to the FLAGS, meet regularly with the MA and the liaison person of the BPV. This provides an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experiences and mutual learning. Based on the identification of any special needs, relevant capacity building initiatives can also be organised.

The FARNET Group on LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) is considered a useful tool for establishing and maintaining contacts in the EFF community. It is an efficient and effective way of sharing experiences across borders.

## 9. Any resource or idea that may be of interest to other countries

The biggest challenge for the FLAGS, considering the relatively small amounts of funds available, is, how to mobilise stakeholders to design and implement projects that offer a genuine perspective for the improvement of the fisheries sector on a structural basis. Due to the relatively limited funding, it is a challenge to find good projects which have, even on a very small scale, a structural, long-term impact.

## 10. Contacts and links

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<sup>4</sup> An extra amount has been made available by the government organisation HBR (Havenbedrijf Rotterdam; Port of Rotterdam) and the Ministry of Water Affairs to the Province of Zeeland, as compensation to the fisheries sector for the latest expansion of the Maasvlakte (the new area created on the North Sea coast for the international harbour of Rotterdam). This amount is added to the funding by the Province of Zeeland, which leads to a net higher amount of available public funding for Zeeland.