



Ministry of Agriculture,
Nature and Food Quality

The Plant Health System in the Netherlands



The Netherlands



Has over **17 million** inhabitants.



Measures around **300 km** from north to south and around **200 km** from east to west.

Is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe.

Has **fertile soil** that is very suitable for growing horticultural crops.



Is the **main trading hub** for plant products in the European Union through the Port of Rotterdam and Amsterdam Airport Schiphol.

Has an ocean climate which creates **excellent conditions** for growing.



Is known as an innovative country that is always looking into ways to **improve technologies** associated with agriculture and farming.

As a **historic trading nation**, has a history and a culture of reaching out and working closely with partners around the globe.





Amsterdam

- National capital
- Amsterdam Airport Schiphol

Wageningen

- National Reference Centre (NRC)
- Wageningen University & Research (WUR)



The Hague

- Political capital and seat of government
- Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality



Utrecht

- Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority
- National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO)



Rotterdam

- Port of Rotterdam



Introduction

A well-functioning and professional plant health system is indispensable when it comes to guaranteeing plant health and thereby food security and food safety. It is also necessary to ensure the reliability of the system of international trade in agricultural products.

This brochure describes the plant health system in the Netherlands. It explains the interaction and cooperation between the different government bodies, the agricultural sector and knowledge institutions. The brochure is mainly intended for international plant protection agencies and other policymakers, as well as for companies involved in the international trade in plant products.

It is the ambition of the Netherlands to have a plant health system that continues to be recognised as leading in the world. We are proud to have a system in which the government, educational institutions, supporting agencies, inspection services and private companies all cooperate to ensure the system's integrity and reliability. We hope that through sharing our way of working with the people and institutions that operate in this field, we can not only show the strength of the Dutch system, but also share good practice with our global trading partners to work on the agricultural challenges of the future.

The Phytosanitary Market Access Team

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

Agriculture in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is located in Western Europe, where the rivers Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt pass through to flow out into the North Sea. Due to its geographical location, excellent infrastructure and highly professional food processing industry, the Netherlands is a vital hub for international trade.

The Dutch agricultural sector covers a wide range of activities, from livestock production to plant cultivation. Besides producing consumer goods, it also produces agricultural inputs such as seeds and propagation material. Dutch agriculture mainly developed after WWII. Prompted by the post-war situation, the country worked on ensuring good-quality food and safe food for the population. The small surface area of the Netherlands compelled farmers to find innovative business solutions. At the heart of this success is cooperation between the three main parties involved in agriculture: the government, knowledge and research centres, and private agricultural businesses.

The Netherlands is one of the Member States of the European Union (EU), which includes one single market for the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital. Once a product has been inspected and allowed entry into the Netherlands, it can move freely within the EU.

From a plant health perspective, this means that a product entering the EU should be free of pests that constitute a risk not just for the importing country, but also for other Member States. As a consequence of this harmonising policy, no EU Member State can have its own import policy. The Netherlands actively participates in the internal EU decision-making processes through which the import requirements are established. When considering exports, the EU negotiates trade agreements with non-EU countries on behalf of the Member States.

However, individual Member States are free to make bilateral arrangements with countries outside the EU regarding export provisions and conditions, and how to organise export certification. Furthermore, the Netherlands has an active role in, and contributes to, the discussion and decision-making process in multilateral treaty organisations, such as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in Rome and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva.

Dutch horticultural innovations include projects such as true potato seeds, potatoes which can be cultivated directly from the seed, future-proof water and waste recycling, and greenhouses that generate more energy than they consume and thus contribute to a reduction in CO₂. The knowledge and the experience the Netherlands has built up over decades has become an important commodity itself. With this knowledge and experience in mind, it is the aim of the Dutch government to contribute to a future of sustainable and reliable agriculture.

Dutch agriculture in numbers

Each year, the Netherlands exports around €90 billion worth of agricultural products and imports around €60 billion. A significant share of goods imported into the Netherlands, around one quarter of all imports, is processed and re-exported. The trade in agricultural products mainly consists of seeds and propagation material, fruits and vegetables, flower bulbs, cut flowers and potted plants, tree nursery products and seeds, but animal products like meat and cheese are also important products for trade. The Dutch production sector is a trendsetter and market leader in flowers, potted plants, flower bulbs, seeds, seed potatoes and other kinds of propagation material.

The Netherlands forms the main hub for countries exporting to the EU. The EU is the destination of 78% of the Netherlands' total exports, and its neighbour Germany is its most important trading partner. For countries like Germany, the Netherlands forms a very important entry point. From the Port of Rotterdam and Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, a significant amount of trade destined for countries further inland is transported through the Netherlands via its many rivers, rails and roads.

Facts about Dutch agricultural



Flower bulbs

More than half of the bulbs produced in the Netherlands is exported to countries outside the EU.



Flowers and plants

In 2017, floricultural products were one of the Netherlands' most valuable export products, with an approximate value of €8 billion.



Potatoes and Onions

Approximately 70% of seed potatoes is exported to more than 80 countries. Onions are exported all around the world from the Netherlands.

and horticultural exports



Seeds and propagation material

35% of the world trade volume in plant propagation material is Dutch.



Fruits and vegetables

The Netherlands exports 70% of its domestic production, and is also a major importer of fruit and vegetables, of which a large quantity is re-exported.



The Netherlands plays an important role when it comes to propagation material. Throughout the world, Dutch companies facilitate the cultivation of local produce through the supply of vegetable seeds, plantlet seeds for ornamental plants, seed potatoes and flower bulbs.

Plant health knowledge and education

The Netherlands is a highly educated country, so the many farmers and growers in the Dutch agricultural sector are well and professionally trained. It is not an exception for farmers to have a university degree.

Furthermore, farmers and growers share their knowledge and try to learn from each other through professionally organised umbrella organisations. These organisations actively maintain and expand the knowledge of growers, both in the Netherlands and abroad. For example, the Dutch Potato Organisation (NAO) offers different technical courses on for example crop protection and the recognition of plant diseases. The Dutch Agricultural Inspection Agencies (AIAs) also provide education. An example is Naktuinbouw, which offers an extensive range of internationally known courses, from technical seed analysis and professional seed sampling to setting up an internal audit system to improve a company or organisation's quality management system.

Agricultural education in the Netherlands

1 research university WUR



5 universities of **applied agricultural sciences**

13 schools for **agricultural skills**



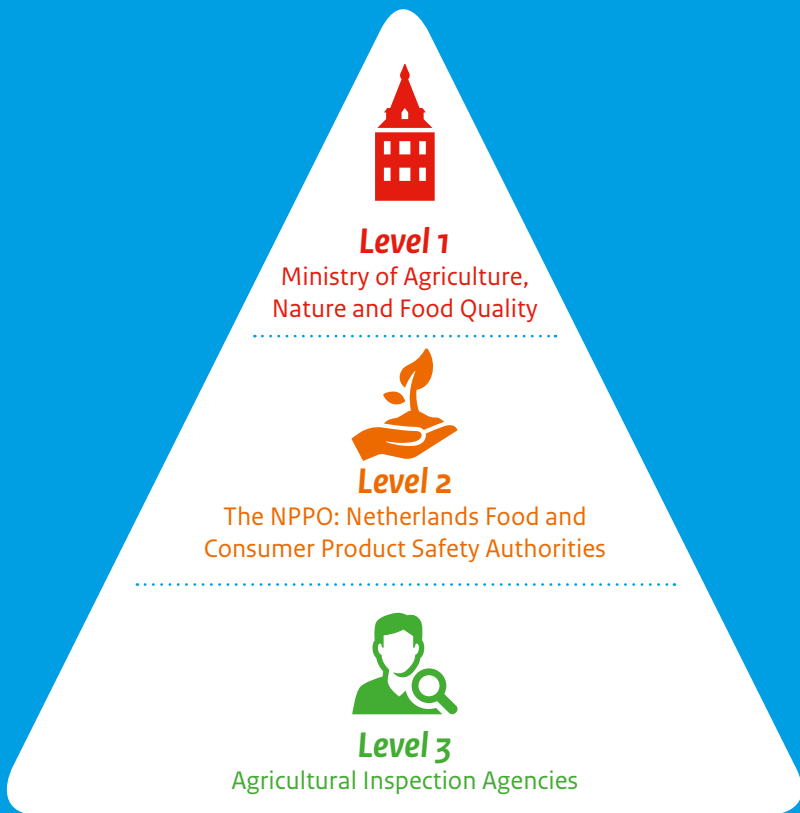
47 schools for pre-vocational **agricultural education**

Academic research and cooperation are well embedded in the Dutch system. Wageningen University & Research (WUR) ranks among the top 3 of agricultural universities worldwide. WUR works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality as well as with the other parts of the agricultural supply chain, and thus forms an integral link between research, policy and agricultural development. As an example, WUR works together with Naktuinbouw's Inspection Service for Horticulture by giving courses on the topic of breeders' rights.

On average, 15% of the revenue of Dutch growers of reproductive material is spent on R&D activities. Because of these investments, the Dutch propagation sector is important when it comes to developing new plant varieties, with 30% of the European applications for new varieties coming from Dutch companies.



The Plant Health System in the Netherlands



The plant health system in the Netherlands is based on international agreements (IPPC and WTO-SPS). The IPPC agreement aims to secure plant health internationally, and the WTO-SPS agreement encourages governments to establish harmonised sanitary and phytosanitary trade measures in order to protect humans, plants and animals, and to prevent unnecessary barriers to trade. Besides these international agreements, the EU plays an important role, since a large part of national plant health policy is based on EU directives and regulations.

The Dutch plant health system consists of three hierarchically ordered levels.



Level 1:

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality wants to ensure good prospects for the Dutch farming, horticultural and fishing sectors. To accomplish this, the Minister aims to improve the economic situation of farmers and strengthen the link between nature and agriculture. Within the framework of international treaties and EU legislation, the ministry is responsible for drawing up legislation and policy in order to meet these ends.

To deal with bilateral and multilateral plant health issues relating to countries outside the EU, a market access team has been appointed, led by the Chief Phytosanitary Officer, which aims to develop good plant health relations with countries outside the EU. This team works closely together with the Dutch Agricultural Attaché Network (LAN) that is active on Dutch embassies worldwide. The Agricultural Attaché operates as the first contact point for countries for plant health and agriculture related inquiries concerning the Netherlands.

Legal framework on which the plant health system is based

- **Import policy:** EU directives and regulations
- **European Internal Market:** EU directives and regulations
- **Export policy:** IPPC, International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs), phytosanitary import requirements of third countries

Responsibilities:

Contracting party under the IPPC

- Plant health policymaking
- Multilateral representation in the WTO-SPS, IPPC, EU, OECD
- Bilateral representation and relations with countries outside of the EU
- Dealing with market access issues
- Supervising the activities of the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO)



Level 2: The NPPO (NVWA)

The Dutch NPPO was established in 1899 and is currently part of the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA). The NVWA is a government body that is part of, and supervised by, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The NPPO performs tasks as laid down in IPPC and SPS agreements, such as:

- forming the competent authority as described by the IPPC;
- representation of the Netherlands in multinational and bilateral plant health meetings on a technical level;
- implementation of international agreements in national plant health procedures;
- implementation of plant health policy and eradication actions in case of outbreaks of regulated pests;
- export inspection and certification;
- guidance on the implementation of EU-wide phytosanitary policies and measures;
- monitoring and surveillance of new and emerging risks;
- performance of the Pest Risk Analysis (PRA);
- management of international plant health projects;
- supervision of officially recognised inspection agencies.

National Reference Centre

The National Reference Centre (NRC) is part of the NPPO/NVWA and comprises five scientific disciplines in the field of plant health: bacteriology, entomology, mycology, nematology and virology. A specialised molecular group contributes to all disciplines. The NRC has broad knowledge and expertise in the field of plant pests and focuses on regulated pests, look-alikes and organisms that pose new threats to plant health in the European Union. A wide range of diagnostic techniques, in combination with the availability of reference materials and extended databases, form the basis for diagnostics. The knowledge and expertise of the NRC is used for diagnostics, research and advice to phytosanitary officers, and is the basis for Dutch and European risk analysis and both national and international policymaking. NRC scientists collaborate in international networks of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) and the IPPC. Furthermore, the NRC coordinates and participates in international research projects within EPPO, EUPHRESKO, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and Horizon 2020 EU Framework Programmes and collaborates with research institutes such as Wageningen University & Research.



Level 3: Agricultural Inspection Agencies

The Agricultural Inspection Agencies (AIAs) are independent government bodies (non-profit organisations). The AIAs are mandated by the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality to perform phytosanitary inspections, and perform these inspections as part of the NPPO. The AIAs have a great deal of technical knowledge on plant health and experience in their respective sector. Each company in the Netherlands that intends to trade plant propagation material or plant products that require a phytosanitary certificate must register with an AIA. The AIAs also engage in educational activities and possess fundamental technical knowledge about plant diseases and related plant health topics in the Dutch system. There are four AIAs, which operate in different sectors:

- **Naktuinbouw:** the Netherlands Inspection Service for Horticulture; for propagating material (cuttings, young plants and trees, seeds) related to floricultural, arboricultural and vegetable crops
- **BKD:** the Flower Bulb Inspection Service, for flower bulbs
- **NAK:** the Dutch General Inspection Service, for agricultural crops such as seed potatoes and arable crop seeds
- **KCB:** the Quality Control Bureau, for consumer products such as fresh fruit and vegetables, potted plants and cut flowers

Cooperation through **capacity development**

When it comes to engaging in long-term relationships with trading partners in third countries, the Netherlands often engages in capacity development. Capacity development is aimed at building up and reinforcing knowledge, skills and capabilities among the plant health institutions in third countries. Not only does this lead to the strengthening of these institutions, it can also contribute to an increased mutual understanding of market access processes and to further harmonisation in accordance with the standards of the IPPC. In this way, capacity development can be beneficial to both the third country and the Netherlands.

The Netherlands works on phytosanitary capacity development through both multilateral and bilateral arrangements, for example through the EU's Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF).

Some common challenges

In 2018, development projects for plant health were carried out in seven countries. Some of these projects involved market access for specific products, while others focused on the harmonisation of international phytosanitary standards with the NPPO of the respective country in order to work towards access to the EU market. In all these projects and the countries involved in capacity development, some common challenges and opportunities were observed.

In some third countries, there is a scope for much improvement when it comes to risk management. With a more efficient system of risk management, a country is able to take factors into account like the produce, the country of origin and the amount of notifications of interceptions. This enables the country to focus on the consignments that constitute a probable risk. Related to this is the development of a more flexible plant health legislation structure. A more flexible legislation structure makes countries able to better adapt to changes in the production

conditions and pathways of trade and can thus ensure that a more efficient system of risk management becomes possible.

Alongside this, it is very important that when a new NPPO is established, it is supported by both the country's relevant government bodies as well as its private agricultural businesses. This is important because the development of a strong NPPO authority ensures that the phytosanitary inspection and certification process is improved and trade is facilitated.

By striking up these challenges, the Netherlands is trying to aid third countries in building a system that is able to properly analyse the presence of pests, increase the reliability of their guarantees, and in this way create a level playing field between trading partners.



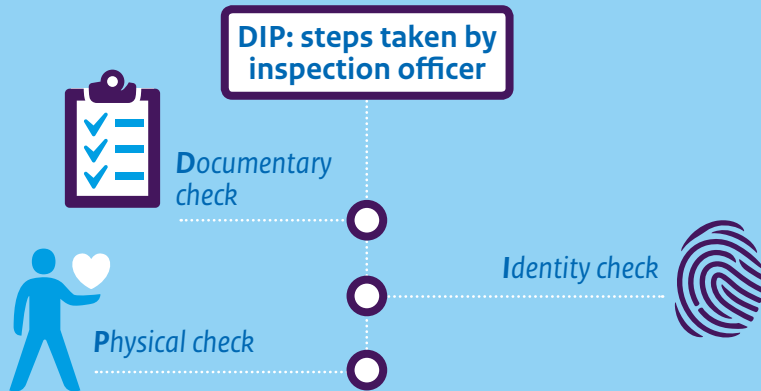
Electronic and paperless certification

If a country sets phytosanitary import requirements, the Dutch NPPO, as the competent authority, must declare that the exported consignment meets the requirements set by the importing country. Many countries require products to be inspected prior to exportation. A public officer from the Dutch NPPO inspects the consignment to verify compliance with the phytosanitary requirements. In the Netherlands, the export inspection and export certification is done at the request of the company that wishes to export its product. For the Netherlands, it is very important to have a smooth process of export certification, so that large flows of trade can pass through without delays. Some sectors, for example cut flowers or fruit and vegetables, work with very short lead times; it is often a matter of hours from order to transport. Electronic certification supports this process significantly. As the documents are not sent with the shipment, but directly from the Dutch NPPO to the competent authority in the designated country, this eliminates the loss of documents during transport and reduces the risk of fraudulent certificates. Finally, electronic and paperless certification can make sure that the information in different systems is linked and automatically used for export certification.

e-CertNL

To facilitate this process of electronic certification, the Netherlands has developed a system called e-CertNL. The goal of e-CertNL is to optimise the quality of the inspection process by maximising the way available information is used by inspection officers, while at the same time reducing corporate burden. e-CertNL is based on a system that was standardised by the UN/CEFACT committee, which was invited by the IPPC to create a standard for SPS certification. Internationally, the Netherlands is striving towards harmonisation of electronic certification processes and is following future developments closely. It already works electronically and paperless with several countries and tries to help other countries with setting up a modern certification system.

The inspection procedure step by step



Who does what in the certification process?



Contact details



Websites

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

<https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-agriculture-nature-and-food-quality>

National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO)

<https://english.nvwa.nl/topics/national-plant-protection-organization-nppo>

The Netherlands IPPC Official Contact Point

<https://www.ippc.int/en/countries/netherlands/>

Information about exporting plants and plant products to the EU

https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/plant_health_biosecurity/non_eu_trade_en

The Agricultural Inspection Agencies (AIA's)

- **Naktuinbouw:** www.naktuinbouw.com
- **NAK:** <https://www.nak.nl/organisatie/nak-services>
- **KCB:** <https://kcb.nl/en/over/organisatie-en-taken>
- **BKD:** www.bkd.eu/bkd



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Colophon

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