

# The Dutch approach to worldwide food security: strengthened through partnerships!

Following the call "Dutch approach to food security works!" that Netherlands Food Partnership sent to the forming parties on behalf of 95 companies, civil society organizations and knowledge institutions, a large number of these parties present below an elaboration of that call.

The Schoof I administration has put food security high on its agenda, as described in the 2025 Budget Memorandum: *"The Cabinet wants the Netherlands, as a leading and image-defining agricultural country, to demonstrate its pioneering role in the world and in these global food systems. The cabinet will come up with an integral national food strategy next year and is making a case for a European food strategy."* (Rijksfinancien.nl Budget 2025)

We applaud such a role by the Netherlands and call on the government, in addition to a national food strategy, to ambitiously pursue a long-term strategy for **global food security and healthy nutrition for all**. Given the international interconnectedness of our food system, this is indispensable and of great importance for the international food system. work of Dutch companies, knowledge institutions and civil society organizations that are active in the strengthening of sustainable development. zable agriculture and climate resilient food systems in low- and middle- income countries (LMICs).

Our two specific recommendations are:

**1** Put climate resilience front and center

**2** Strengthen Dutch food diplomacy

## Food, climate, security and prosperity closely linked

The Dutch agriculture and food sector is strongly intertwined with Europe and the rest of the world. Three quarters of the food produced in the Netherlands is exported. Moreover, 75% percent of the agricultural land used to grow our food is abroad. The Netherlands is the world's fourth largest trading nation and 80 percent of global horticultural projects involve Dutch technology. This interconnectedness ensures economic resilience and prosperity, but also makes the food sector sensitive to developments on the world stage.



For instance, the war in Ukraine immediately caused rising energy, food and commodity prices, and current international geopolitical tensions are disrupting trade flows between countries. In addition, extreme weather events caused by climate change are causing crops to fail more frequently, crop areas to shift and agricultural systems that feed hundreds of millions of people to be at risk. Besides being affected by climate change, the agriculture and food sector also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions (26%), through deforestation and emissions from production, processing and distribution.

Enough food is produced worldwide, but all these developments are increasing inequality, especially for poorer people, especially women, in low- and middle-income countries. Currently, nearly 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. This contributes to increased instability, national conflict and possibly migration. Strengthening local agricultural production and food sector can contribute to peace and security in less stable regions. NATO therefore calls combating food insecurity not only a moral imperative, but also critical to our national security and resilience.

# 1

## Put climate resilience front and center

Climate resilience in food systems refers to how far all components of a food system (from production and processing to distribution and consumption) are allowed to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts while ensuring food security. Examples include: sustainable agricultural practices that also contribute to better soil and water management, crop varieties more resilient to climate stress, and promoting biodiversity. We have already achieved a lot on adaptation and mitigation in low- and middle- income countries with our innovative strength, collaboration and knowledge exchange. However, climate change will become a greater challenge in the near future. Building climate resilient food systems will require long-term solutions, more large-scale investments, (local) leadership and inclusive and good governance. Therefore, we ask:

### 1. Link the Dutch Climate Agenda to the Food System Approach with context-specific efforts and investments

The Netherlands' International Climate Strategy is clear: "Science shows that it is one for twelve to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Adjustments in our food system and reducing our ecological footprint are necessary. Recognizing the importance of the relationship with climate change is key to this. The Netherlands has the knowledge, expertise and technology to contribute to climate resilient agriculture, by, for instance, supporting innovations in the seed sector, nature-inclusive agriculture and agroforestry, saline crops in which technological and social knowledge are combined. Moreover, both the public and private sectors build on long experience in working with local (SME) businesses, farmer cooperatives, women's organizations, universities and educational institutions; these are important links in improving local food systems. Our recommendations:

>Advocate internationally for earmarked climate finance for sustainable food systems. Now only 4.3% of global climate finance goes to agri-food systems. Given the direct link of food systems and climate change, increased financial commitment to making food systems more sustainable is the most effective approach.



*"The Netherlands is very important for the international safeguarding of food and nutrition security due to its holistic approach engaging national and international organisations, including farmers, academia, civil society and private sector as well as the active role in bringing together food security, nutrition and environmental aspects of food systems."*

Lawrence Haddad - Executive director of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

- >Leverage Dutch innovation, knowledge and expertise more effectively by increasing the focus of the Netherlands' international climate strategy on mitigation and adaptation **within food systems**. A context- specific view is essential here, starting from the existing knowledge, opportunities and needs in partner countries, especially those of the most marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- >Ensure that Dutch agriculture and trade policy is **coherent** and actually contributes to the Paris climate goals, the UN biodiversity treaty and the International Development Goals (SDGs).
- >Invest in different climate resilient ways of production that take into account the local context. Involve local farmers and civil society organizations in the development and decision-making process so that **technical and social innovations** can go hand in hand and social embedding is guaranteed.

### 2. Effectiveness through alignment with efforts on water, soil and biodiversity

A future-proof food system that provides economic perspective for farmers depends on sufficient and usable water, clean air, pollinators, agrobiodiversity and healthy soil. Sustainable agricultural practices contribute to improved soil quality, water availability and increased biodiversity. Dutch organizations and companies offer innovations, have experience with local (often easy to apply) solutions, and provide knowledge to diversify food production and increase biodiversity. Our recommendations:

>As in Dutch national agricultural policy, make clean (drinking) water, healthy soil and increases in biodiversity guiding international food security and trade policy.

>Present the Dutch programs, innovations and experience at international water, climate and biodiversity conferences, at UN agencies and within the EU for the benefit of increased cooperation and international (agricultural) funding for healthy soil and water systems and biodiversity.

>Invest in innovation, research and programs that effectively reduce food waste and food losses. One-third of all food produced worldwide is lost and with it the use of labor hours, space and raw materials and natural resources, while lost food causes up to one-tenth of global greenhouse gas emissions.

### 3. Healthy, safe and affordable food as a guiding principle

The global challenge is not only how to feed the growing population, but also how to provide affordable, varied, nutritious and safe food that can be sustained for generations. Dutch companies, knowledge and civil society organizations are working on this by focusing on: stimulating more local fruit and vegetable crops, food enrichment, education on healthy food, processing and marketing and of course research on applications for healthy food. This in cooperation with local producers, entrepreneurs and specific (vulnerable) target groups such as women and young people. Healthy and safe food also increases opportunities for regional and international market development. Our recommendations:

>Increase local knowledge, education and production of fruits and vegetables in regions that are increasingly dependent on (imported) grains and *cash* crops. This contributes to more available healthy food, increases opportunities for regional trade and provides employment opportunities for small-scale farmers and gardeners.

>Improve seed systems (formal and informal) to strengthen the garden construction sector. More investments in partnerships between public and private parties as well as local entrepreneurs and farmers are needed, especially where companies invest primarily in commercial crops.

>Commit to a healthy food environment, with policies and developments aimed not only at promoting production, but also at (safely) processing and making a healthy and balanced diet available and affordable for different groups. Especially in urban areas, access to healthy food is a challenge for increasingly large groups of people.



*"We work closely together with international organizations, private donors, local NGOs, and governments to really scale up our impact. By joining forces, we're able to drive systemic change for both farmers and markets. We don't just talk about change; our local teams make it happen through practical, local, hands-on solutions and technical expertise that's been tried and tested in the field. Because for a farmer, seeing is believing."*

Simon Groot - Founder of East West Seed and  
World Food Prize Laureate 2019



*"We need the Netherlands in our common efforts in food systems transformation to secure enough and healthy food. Their seed sector expertise for example has proven to be impactful to adapt to climate change. This is important for Africa and the Netherlands in ensuring broadening of the food base and dietary diversity."*

Andrew Mushita - UNFSS Food Champion and Executive  
Director of Community Technology Development Trust in  
Zimbabwe

## How? Through equal cooperation

Through Dutch **multistakeholder cooperation** with farmers, (SME) entrepreneurs, knowledge institutions and civil society organizations in partner countries, we are making a demonstrable impact on better access to healthy and affordable food for millions of people. In this way we strengthen sustainable food production, processing and marketing. We also contribute to an improved position of farmers and their organizations by enabling them to produce for their own market. Moreover, this way of working contributes to investment opportunities and a better market position for companies, strengthening civil society and increasing our own learning capacity.

A multistakeholder approach is only successful by establishing and strengthening **equal, sustainable partnerships** with partners in partner countries. Equality requires understanding each other's position, puts the relationship at the center and seeks cooperation based on mutual interests\*. This core value should be central to a long-term vision of global food security. To counter increasing global food insecurity and to sustainably support farmers and consumers in the Netherlands and abroad, an undiminished commitment by the Dutch government to building partnerships will be indispensable.

*\* Africa Strategy: In a successful, equal cooperation, important things come together: intensive bilateral and multilateral cooperation; promoting Dutch, African and mutual economic and strategic interests; promoting (regional) stability; making mobility and migration agreements; achieving the UN Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU); and increasing the prosperity and climate resilience of people and communities in Africa and Europe.*

# 2

## Strengthen Dutch food diplomacy

The geopolitical dimension of food security poses risks that we can mitigate through international cooperation. The Netherlands has always looked outward and is known as a reliable partner. We want to maintain this reputation and influence; for this, long-term investments and reciprocal relationships are essential. We can achieve this through fair regional and international trade\*, a level playing field for farmers here and farmers in low- and middle-income countries, and mutual knowledge exchange. We have much to offer internationally. Conversely, knowledge and experience from abroad increases our innovative strength and offers us the opportunity to work in cooperation with other countries on problems that are transcend national borders.

In cooperation with the Dutch government (including LVVN attaché networks, embassies), the partnerships of Dutch companies, civil society organizations and knowledge institutions are already contributing to innovative solutions for food security and climate resilience. This is bringing the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and the SDGs closer. An increased commitment to international food diplomacy is important for creating an international level playing field and for long-term effective cooperation. Thus, food diplomacy contributes to food security in low and middle income countries as well as in the Netherlands.

We call for strengthening Dutch diplomacy by the:

### 1. Actively promoting the Dutch food security vision and approach on the international stage both bilaterally and multilaterally

Advocate for better positioning of Dutch parties and their partners, robust funding for food and nutrition programs in low- and middle-income countries, and improved donor coordination. A credible and influential place at international diplomatic tables requires that the Netherlands demonstrate their commitment by investing in food and nutrition security programs with partner countries.

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\* It aligns with an action plan that VNO-NCW and IDH are developing, with Dutch companies and organizations, for security of supply and further sustainability of international chains of food and agricultural products.



*"Ending hunger, it can be done! With the power of collaboration in our international Right2Grow partnership between the Dutch government, local entrepreneurs, civil society organizations and governments, we are building lasting food and nutrition security for all."*

Annelies Kanis- Director The Hunger Project / The Netherlands

### 2. Building long-term equal cooperation with sector actors, including in partner countries, by actively bringing them together

Use the existing energy and opportunities of the partnerships between companies, governments, knowledge and civil society organizations by learning from each other. Do this with specific attention to the interests of future generations: give young people a structural place in partnerships and actively involve them in diplomacy, decision making and policy implementation.

### 3. Commit to fair trade and transparent chains with a smaller carbon footprint

Promote standards for fair and sustainable production and trade practices, such as the recently introduced EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence. Through fair and sustainable trade agreements, create a level playing field for farmers worldwide\*\* and for building resilient local and regional food markets.

### 4. Appointing an international food envoy

As the face of Dutch food diplomacy, he/she contributes to strengthening the Dutch position in international arenas and ensures coherence in policy on (inter)national food and food security, sustainable trade and a level playing field.

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\*\* "A coherent Dutch food, agriculture and trade policy works for farmers both inside and outside the Netherlands." *Manifesto* of 70+ civil society organizations, companies and knowledge institutions from the Netherlands and their international partners, 2023

## IN SHORT,

We are convinced of the usefulness and importance of working on sustainable, fair and climate resilient food systems in low- and middle-income countries. For the good of everyone in the Netherlands and beyond, as well as for the planet and for the economy. A reliable government as a partner was and is indispensable in this regard. The ministries of Agriculture (LVVN) and Foreign Affairs (BZ), identify promoting global food security as their joint task. We are eager to take on this challenge together with them and the entire cabinet. We extend an open hand to collaborate with us in building a resilient food system that contributes positively to climate goals, enhances global food security, and leverages the Dutch collaborative approach, knowledge, and expertise. We are keen to engage with politicians and policymakers on the development and implementation of this.



*This call is a follow-up of the co-production that 95 organizations drafted in May 2024, under the auspices of Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP). Contact: Ivo Demmers, [idemmers@nlfoodpartnership.com](mailto:idemmers@nlfoodpartnership.com)*