

Rural Pact Netherlands: a stakeholder network helps shape the future of Dutch rural areas

SUMMARY

The Rural Pact network in the Netherlands provides a platform for stakeholders to discuss rural development priorities and implementation of the EU's long-term vision for rural areas (LTVRA) in the Dutch context. It also strengthens the voice of the country's rural areas across different governance levels and sectors.

By mid-2026, the network had over 150 active members from rural networks, civil society, local authorities, academia, business and national government. Its work includes thematic meetings, 'walking dialogues' on rural policy topics, policy recommendations, and developing a common vision and action plan on the future of rural areas.



CONTEXT

Dutch rural areas face structural challenges linked to intensive agriculture, nature restoration, spatial pressures, access to services and demographic change. National policy responses have historically been sectoral, driven principally by agricultural policy, with no strong cross-sectoral platform for rural voices.

The Rural Pact network in the Netherlands was set up in 2024 to address this gap. This informal platform brings together national stakeholders to discuss rural development priorities and implementation of the LTVRA in the Dutch context.



OBJECTIVES

- > **Facilitate regular exchanges** between rural networks, civil society, authorities, researchers and national representatives;
- > **Strengthen the voice of rural areas** across governance levels and sectors;
- > Build **shared ownership of long-term goals** for rural development, rooted in the LTVRA;
- > Translate the LTVRA into Dutch policy through a **common vision, action plan** and **policy recommendations**;
- > Support **cross-ministerial cooperation** and **rural proofing** of national policies (spatial planning, mobility and public services);
- > Share **best practices** and build a **rural knowledge platform**.



Themes: Governance; democracy and participation

Country: Netherlands

Organisations:

- > Dutch LEADER Network, civil society organisation
- > Landelijke Vereniging voor Kleine Kernen (LVKK), civil society organisation
- > P10, association of the 34 largest Dutch rural municipalities, public authority
- > Wageningen University, academic institution

Start & end date: 06/2024 - ongoing

Budget: EUR 48 000 for 2026

Funding source:

- > Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature

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ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

The network began in 2024 as a grassroots initiative and held its first meeting online in June that year. Three in-person meetings followed over the next year and a half, leading to the **establishment of a core group** that acts as an **informal board**. The municipality of Hof van Twente acts as the legal representative.

A draft **manifesto** was drawn up following the Rural Pact Coordination Group's [Declaration](#) on the future of rural areas and rural development policy in the EU. The network plans to use the final manifesto as a **basis for advocacy**.

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature pledged to make a **financial contribution** to the Rural Pact Netherlands, as outlined in a national **political commitment** to the EU Rural Pact signed in December 2025. The financial contribution, received at the beginning of 2026, was due to support four **thematic meetings** during the year, development of the **common vision** and **action plan**, and further **expansion of the network**.

Moving forward, the Rural Pact Netherlands may shift from being an informal platform to having a **legal status**, while remaining a **bottom-up** network. It also plans to propose the creation of a rural policy council to the Dutch government.



RESULTS

- > By mid-2026, the network had **over 150 active members** from politics, academia, civil society and business;
- > A **manifesto** was developed to provide a basis for advocacy work;
- > A **financial contribution** was received from the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature at the beginning of 2026 to support the network's work that year;
- > The Rural Pact Netherlands' **2026 work programme** – including four thematic meetings, a common vision on the future of rural areas and an action plan – was adopted on 11 March 2026.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

- > The network is an informal, member-driven platform which **ensures that it remains flexible**. The municipality of Hof van Twente acts as legal representative on behalf of the Rural Pact Netherlands. This, together with the political commitment under the EU Rural Pact, **gives the network legitimacy**.
- > The grassroots initiative of the network together with the formal political commitment help translate the EU rural agenda into the Dutch context. The political commitment has given Rural Pact Netherlands **national recognition, structured cooperation** with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature and a reliable **public contribution**.



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