

Agriculture in the Netherlands

Jamie van Mourik

Main facts about Dutch agriculture

The Netherlands is the world's second largest exporter of agricultural products, after the USA. Together with the USA and France, the Netherlands is one of the world's three leading producers of vegetables and fruit. The main reason of the Netherlands good position in the agricultural sector is the innovative agri-food technology the country uses.

The Netherlands supplies a quarter of all the vegetables that are exported from Europe. The country is appointed as number one producer of onions. 1 million tonnes of onions are exported worldwide every year, which makes us the international market leader. Of the world's 40 largest food and beverage companies, 12 of them have a major production site in the Netherlands.

Efficiency

The agri-food sector can be that exceptional in the Netherlands because of the mild climate, flat and fertile soil and the favorable location of the country at the heart of Europe. Another key factor why the Netherlands can distribute that much of agri-food is the presence the harbor "Port of Rotterdam" and Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. The logistic and transport systems are highly efficient.

Agricultural entrepreneurs from the Netherlands are front-runners in efficient and sustainable production systems and processes. This can be concluded since the Dutch agricultural entrepreneurs obtain on average 5 times higher productivity than the European average.

The Dutch machinery for food processing sector has a turnover of 2,3 billion euros. 80 percentages of these machines is fated for export. The Netherlands is in this sector the global market leader as well, the machinery for food processing. The Dutch machines are mainly specialized in usage for poultry, red meat, cheese products and bakery.

Dutch universities are very important for the R&D of the agri-food. Their contribution to the Dutch successes in the agricultural sector is huge. The Netherlands has its own region, where almost all agri-food and nutrition research centres are located. This region, the Food Valley Region, is one of the most authoritative centres in Europe related to agri-food.

Agriculture and Dutch economy

The agri-business is an important driving force of the Dutch economy. The agricultural sector and all the competitive advantages related to R&D in agriculture contribute almost 10 percent of the whole Dutch economy. This 10 percentages equals almost 52 billion of added value to the Dutch GDP. The agriculture in the Netherlands provides 660.000 jobs. This is almost the same as 10 percentages of the total employment in the Netherlands. The total value of exported Dutch agri-food in 2012 equaled 75,4 billion euros (a huge amount!). 26 percent of this exported agri-food went straight to our neighbor

country Germany. Germany is the biggest customer of the Netherlands related to the agricultural food.

Water defense

“God created the world, but the Dutch created Holland”

Flood control is an important issue for the Netherlands. Without dikes, a large of the Netherlands would be flooded. Nowadays, almost 27 percent of the Netherlands is actually below sea level. In this flood-prone area lives around 60 percentages of the total country's population. Only time will tell if the flood protection of the Netherlands is strong enough to protect the country. During history the Netherlands grew larger with the aid of dikes and polders. The country even created a province, Flevoland, This province is the result of the biggest land reclamation project ever undertaken in history. Where once was only water today it is the residence of 400.000 Dutch inhabitants.

The Netherlands has the world's largest flood defense project, the Dutch Delta Works. This project is one of the most extensive engineering projects in the world. The Dutch Delta Works has a distance of almost 16500 kilometers. The Netherlands has a lot of experience with flood defense. The expertise of Dutch companies is frequently used worldwide to construct and maintain ports and waterways.

The expenditure for water management in the Netherlands was 7,2 billion euros in 2014. This amount concerns the investment to protect the Netherlands from flooding. The expenses were incurred by central government. This sum corresponds to 1,1 percent of the 2014 GDP. Costs of water management in the country are expected to increase 1 to 2 billion euros by 2020, unless something is done.