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Dutch farmers could be paid to close their livestock farms under new scheme



By Angela Symons (https://twitter.com/euronews) with AP

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The EU has approved a €1.5 billion scheme to buy out Dutch farmers and reduce nitrogen emissions.

The EU has approved plans for the Dutch government to buy out farmers.

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... plan to drastically slash nitrogen emissions, a major source of which is livestock farms. ... staging protests (https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/06/23/we-are-not-pollution-producers-dutch-farm) ... emissions-targ) over emissions reduction targets since October 2019.

Nearly €1.5 billion will be ... isate farmers who voluntarily close farms located near nature reserves. Some 3,000 farms are expected to be e

The Dutch ruling coalition wants to cut emissions, predominantly nitrogen oxide and ammonia, by 50 per cent nationwide by 2030.



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Why does the Netherlands want to close down farms?

Despite its small size, the Netherlands is the world's second-biggest exporter of agricultural products by value behind the US.

Dutch (https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/10/03/dutch-flower-growers-are-cutting-costs-by-using-cow-poo-instead-of-buying-gas) agricul were worth €122.3 billion last year, according to the national statistics office.

Intensive farming has left the small nation with higher nitrogen oxide levels than EU regulations allow. These emissions worsen climate change (https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/04/11/french-and-italian-farmers-turn-to-fires-and-fans-to-protect-harvests-from-spring-frosts) and ca biodiversity.

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In recent years, government proposals to cut nitrogen emissions have included reducing livestock numbers by a third. Some farmers (https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/04/12/we-do-honest-work-french-farmer-pleads-for-new-reservoir-to-be-built-following-violent-cla) fe would face compulsory buyouts to achieve this goal.

The recently approved voluntary strategy involves buying up and halting work at farms (https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/04/05/clean-energy solar-panel-projects-divide-families-in-the-us) responsible for large-scale emissions of nitrogen.

On Tuesday (2 May), the country received confirmation from the European Commission that the plans are permissible under state aid rules.

"The schemes will improve the environment conditions in those areas and will promote a more sustainable and environmentally friendly production in the (https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/02/22/how-breeding-low-emissions-sheep-could-bring-down-farmings-methane-footprint) sector, withc distorting competition," said Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President in charge of competition policy, in a statement approving the aid.

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What do farmers think about the buyout scheme?

Agricultural organisation LTO said buyouts must be “designed in such a way that they really offer farmers who stop voluntarily the opportunity to properly run their business.”

The organisation also called for “transition schemes” that would allow farmers to reduce **nitrogen emissions** (<https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/diary-and-rice-which-foods-contribute-the-most-to-global-warming>) using methods such as technical innovation or switching to other agricultural activities.

“This is the only way farmers can make an informed and well-considered decision about their future,” LTO said.



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A pro-agriculture political party won **Dutch provincial elections** (<https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/03/16/dutch-farmer-protests-emissions-re-lead-to-rise-of-new-political-movement>) in March, underscoring the depth of discontent among farmers fuelled by the nitrogen reduction plans. The Dutch government has tasked provincial legislatures with formulating and implementing exact proposals to reduce nitrogen emissions.

Farmers held several large demonstrations, blocking highways and supermarket warehouses last year to protest the reforms that they cast as an existential threat to their way of life.

The demonstrations have also spread to neighbouring Belgium, where hundreds of farmers drove their tractors into downtown Brussels last month to protest the reforms that they cast as an existential threat to their way of life. **cut nitrogen** (<https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/02/16/baby-kangaroo-poo-could-be-the-secret-to-stopping-cows-methane-farts-research-pollution>).

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