



Dutch Farmers Protest Climate Policies They Say Could Drive Them Out of Business and Fuel Global Hunger Crisis

Description

NETHERLANDS: Dutch farmers are protesting new climate policies they say will force them to kill off livestock and drive them out of business — policies which some argue also will drive up consumer food prices and contribute to the global hunger crisis.

The new Dutch policy stems from a 2019 court order that nitrogen-compound pollution in the Netherlands “will have to be cut by 70% to 80%.”

But as Dutch News reported:

“The government’s strategy to take a regional approach to the issue will lead to major problems in parts of Gelderland and Noord-Brabant, where livestock farming is concentrated and a number of vulnerable habitats are being seriously damaged.

“To meet the new rules, the amount of livestock farming will have to be reduced drastically, and that means some farmers will have to be bought out and shut down their operations.”

According to a [recent report](#) by journalist Kim Iversen, “the farmers in the most regulated areas would essentially be put out of business.”

Iversen said farmers who do not “voluntarily” accept the government’s proposal may have their land seized outright.

“With the latest round of tightening of regulations, the Dutch government has announced more multi-billion-dollar buyout arrangements but has also stated they will expropriate the land from farmers who do not comply,” Iversen said. “They’ll take their land.”

Iversen quoted Henk Staghouwer, the Dutch minister of agriculture, nature and food quality, who said, “There is not a future for all farmers within this approach.”

Staghouwer offered to begin negotiations with the farmers, Iversen said, “but only on the condition the

participants condemn the demonstrations” taking place in response to the new policies.

But as Iversen [reported](#), the protests haven’t died down.

Protesting farmers sprayed manure on a local town hall and dumped a truckload of manure in front of the home of Dutch minister of nature and nitrogen policy. Some farmers even brought their cows to a protest outside the Dutch parliament.

Others have blocked roads and highways, causing “major traffic jams,” and blockaded parts of the German-Dutch border, [with help](#) from freight and dock workers and fishermen.

In response, police fired tear gas on demonstrating farmers and military tanks were brought in to try and clear the blockades.

Similar to events that transpired in Canada during the truckers’ convoy there earlier this year, the Dutch government also called in tow truck companies to remove tractors, but according to Iversen, “they’re refusing to get involved.”

Meanwhile, Dutch media described the protests as “extremist” and the work of “militants,” Iversen said, leading farmers to also blockade the headquarters of media outlets.

In the midst of the protests, the country’s Farmer-Citizen political party has soared to second place, according to a recent poll. The party, which holds one seat in the Dutch parliament today, would increase its share to 11 seats if elections were held today, Iversen said.

About a third of 50,000 Dutch farms expected to ‘disappear’ by 2030

The Dutch government’s actions are attracting global attention — including in New Zealand, where the government prepared a [report](#) on the developments in the Netherlands.

The report describes the Dutch government’s policies as part of “its long-awaited plan to tackle the country’s ‘nitrogen crisis,’” adding the “bold plan zeroes in on the Netherlands’ agriculture industry, calling for scaled emissions reduction across the country.”

The report references the Dutch minister of nature and nitrogen, who said she “expects about a third of the 50,000 Dutch farms to ‘disappear’ by 2030” in what is described by some experts as “the greatest overhaul of the Dutch agricultural sector in history.”

These farms are expected to “disappear” via the aforementioned “voluntary” buyouts on the part of the government, according to the New Zealand government report, drawing on a “25 billion euro [\$25.6 billion] Nitrogen Fund to help farmers (voluntarily) quit, relocate or downsize their business and make them more nature-friendly.”

The New Zealand report detailed the “compensation” that would be provided to farmers who “voluntarily” choose to downsize:

“Dairy farmers that want to be bought out need to reduce their cattle stocks by 95 percent and permanently relinquish their right to increase stocks in future.

“For pig, chicken, and turkey farms, this percentage is 80 percent.

“The subsidy the farmers receive include compensation for losing production rights and for the value loss of the company. 270 million euro [\$274.3 million] is reserved for dairy compensation, 115 million [\$116.8 million] for chicken and turkey-related compensation, and 115 million for pig-related compensation.”

Could Bill Gates’ connection to Dutch agriculture minister have anything to do with new nitrogen policy?

In a recent episode of the “RFK Jr. The Defender Podcast,” agricultural researcher, permaculturalist and author Christian Westbrook — also known as the “Ice Age Farmer” — said the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have long pushed the idea of a so-called Green Revolution, based on the idea that animals and plants are “dirty and dangerous.”

Agricultural researcher, permaculturalist and author Christian Westbrook joined me on my podcast to discuss what’s behind the coming food crisis. <https://t.co/0v6V8Unxrm>

— Robert F. Kennedy Jr (@RobertKennedyJr) [July 7, 2022](#)

Westbrook warned that narratives crafted to appeal to “green consumers” disguise a more nefarious intent on the part of the global elite who, in fact, are in the process of launching a “hostile takeover” of the global food system.

In fact, Dutch political commentator and legal philosopher Eva Vlaardingerbroek recently raised questions about the Dutch nitrogen-reduction policy and a possible link to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Vlaardingerbroek tweeted:

?? The Dutch minister who pushed the nitrogen law that grants the government the power to expropriate our farmers’ land has a brother who owns online supermarket [@picnic](#). Guess who invested \$600 million in that company? Bill ‘fake meat’ Gates. This is what corruption looks like. pic.twitter.com/qEm0WThTk8

— Eva Vlaardingerbroek (@EvaVlaar) [July 5, 2022](#)

In her tweet, Vlaardingerbroek referred to this statement by Gates:

“I do think all rich countries should move to 100% synthetic beef.

“Eventually, that green premium is modest enough that you can sort of change the [behavior of] people or use regulation to totally shift the demand.”

Gates’ \$600 million investment in Picnic is reportedly intended to:

“... speed up its expansion in France and Germany, and will invest especially in robotic fulfilment

centres, electric vehicles and a team of software developers.

“Moreover, the company wants to create a framework to satisfy the growing demand — and to do so more sustainably.”

As it turns out, Staghouwer, the Dutch agriculture minister, has been examining the “feasibility” of introducing a meat consumption tax.

And, according to Iversen, “since 2017, the pig population [in The Netherlands] has been shrinking because the government has been paying farmers to close their businesses.”

In 2019, an organization known as CGIAR [Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research] received an initial \$79 million in funding, with \$310 million to be provided over three years, from a coalition headed by Gates and composed of the World Bank, the European Commission, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the U.K.

CGIAR, with this funding, intends to make “investments contributing to work in crop breeding, seed systems, gender equity, livestock, nutrition, and policy.” While the focus of these investments will be the developing world, the presence of the Dutch government in this initiative is notable.

‘Farmers did not create the nitrogen problem’ — the chemical industry did

In her report on Dutch farmers, Iversen said no one is arguing we shouldn’t address climate change. It’s more a matter of how do we balance that need with the need to address today’s urgent hunger crisis — and who pays the price?

“[The] climate and environment are extremely important issues and we should always work to improve our planet,” Iversen said. “But when people can’t get to work or put food on the table, the question becomes whether or not we’re going about this the right way.”

And while much of today’s climate change-related rhetoric is focused on reducing carbon emissions, the “next on the chopping block seems to be nitrogen emissions,” Iversen said.

She added:

“Nitrogen, which is a key nutrient for plants, is also a pollutant. Fertilizers that washes off the fields can end up in lakes and coastal areas, killing marine life.

“Airborne ammonia from things like power plants and engines contributes to smog and other environmental issues, but in farm-centric areas like the Netherlands, it mostly comes from livestock, urine and manure.”

“In order to reduce nitrogen emissions, you would have to reduce livestock,” Iversen said, as “many farmers use manure as fertilizer.”

But according to scholar and environmental activist Vandana Shiva, Ph.D., “The nitrogen problem in agriculture is a problem created by synthetic nitrogen fertilizers made from fossil fuels,” which “contribute to atmospheric pollution and climate change.”

Shiva told The Defender that synthetic fertilizer production is highly energy-intensive:

“One kilogram [2.2 pounds] of nitrogen fertilizer requires the energy equivalent of two liters [0.53 gallons] of diesel.

“Energy used during fertilizer manufacture was equivalent to 191 billion liters [50.5 billion gallons] of diesel in 2000 and is projected to rise to 277 billion [73.2 billion gallons] in 2030.”

While the nitrogen pollution problem must be addressed, Shiva said, she sharply criticized the Dutch government’s “unscientific, unjust and undemocratic response,” which places the onus on farmers.

“Farmers did not create the nitrogen problem,” she said. “The problem is created by the chemical industry.”

Shiva added:

“According to the ‘polluter pays’ principle, the chemical industry must pay for the pollution. Farmers are consumers of fertilizers, not the manufacturers. They are victims of a chemical-intensive industrial agriculture system.

“The planet and people need more farmers, not less.”

Instead, according to Shiva:

“The scientific and just response to the nitrogen problem is [to] shift from fossil-fuel chemical agriculture to biodiverse ecological agriculture and regenerative farming, and to create transition strategies for farmers to shift to ecological agriculture, which regenerates soil nitrogen while making farmers free of harmful and costly chemicals.

“Chemical-free food is good for the health of the planet and people.”

While not directly addressing the situation in the Netherlands, Oxfam, in a July 6 press release, also criticized attempts to combat pollution by targeting farmers.

According to the press release:

“Governments must stop making empty promises or creating more bureaucratic processes.

“Instead, they need to invest in small-scale food producers and food workers. They need to repurpose our global agriculture and food system to better serve the health of people, our planet, and our economies.”

That’s the problem with the Dutch government’s policies, according to Iversen, which appear to be intended to favor major agribusiness companies at the expense of small farmers.

“[The] move towards this more sophisticated style of farming ... would then be controlled by a few large companies and put all the small farmers out of business,” she said. “That’s what the Dutch are protesting.”

What happens to Dutch farms 'affects us all'

Whatever happens in the Netherlands in terms of food production will likely have global ramifications, due to the size of the country's agricultural sector, according to Iversen, who said, "What happens to their farms affects us all."

After the U.S., the Netherlands is the biggest exporter of agricultural produce in the world, [according to the Dutch government](#), which states, "The Dutch agricultural sector exports some €65 billion [\$66.1 billion] of agricultural produce annually. This is 17.5% of total Dutch exports."

"Artificial fertilizer prices have been skyrocketing lately," Iversen said. "With the inability to use manure, those [food] prices are only going to go even higher."

She added:

"Some [Dutch] farms will go under ... just because of their inability to secure fertilizer for their farms.

"The ones that can stay in operation will of course pass those extra costs on to the consumer, driving food prices up even more than they are now, and with less meat on the market, we're looking at a serious price crisis."

Iversen said "Dutch farmers know this," which is why they are "sounding the alarm bell" and have been joined in their protests by many non-farmers, as "it isn't just their businesses that would be impacted, it's all of us."

U.K.-based analyst V.N. Gelis told The Defender, "Disrupting food supplies, plus the effects of the [COVID-19] vaccine," referring to increasingly prevalent vaccine injuries, "weaken people's resistance."

The above may, however, not even entirely capture the full extent of the price increases experienced by many consumers.

In a 2016 interview, analyst Paul Craig Roberts, former U.S. assistant secretary of the treasury for economic policy, explained how the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is calculated:

"Let's take the consumer price level. That measures inflation. Over time, the way the government has measured inflation has fundamentally been altered.

"Formerly, there was a fixed basket of goods; items in the basket were weighted according to an estimate of their percentage of consumer expenditures, and so if an item went up, then the index would go up by the weight of that item in the basket of goods, so that you had a measure of a constant standard of living."

This has since changed, according to Roberts:

"What they did was, they introduced the 'substitution effect.' They argued that when the price of something goes up, consumers substitute a less expensive alternative ... When the price of something went up, they threw it out of the index and stuck something in there that was less expensive.

“In that way, they changed the index from measuring a constant standard of living to one that measures a declining standard of living.

“They do this in order to avoid having to pay cost-of-living adjustments on social security. That is one way they understate inflation.”

By Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D.

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Date Created

07/08/2022