



Delta Programme in the Netherlands





The Netherlands has a close and historic relationship with water. The country has always thrived between the sea and the great rivers. Water brings prosperity and vitality but it can also be unpredictable and a major cause of problems.

Since completion of the Delta Works the Netherlands has ranked as the world's best protected delta. At the same time continued investment is crucial in ensuring the safety of the next and future generations – and their ability to go on living and working in this beautiful country.

Protection against flooding and provision of freshwater demand effort and investment, all year and every year. This task has been increased by the large numbers of people who now live behind the ring of dykes, plus increased prosperity. Compared with the past there is more and more to protect.

Meanwhile the land is getting lower, the sea level is rising and wetter and drier periods are expected. Any excess could mean the major rivers having to deal with larger volumes of water. Water shortfalls could have a negative impact on the economy (agriculture, industry and shipping), the utilities (water and energy), as well as the dykes (safety).



Delta Programme

The objective of the Delta Programme – a new Delta Plan – is to protect the Netherlands against flooding and to ensure supplies of freshwater, now and in the future. Making this plan involves many issues and factors both around spatial, urban planning, the economy – and on the level of agriculture, nature and recreation.

As well as operating nationwide to implement planned hydraulic works, the Delta Programme also prepares five Delta Decisions. Our current programmes, including Room for the River, work towards organizing and establishing flood protection – now. With the Delta Decisions we prepare for the future. The current programmes will be completed between 2015 and 2020 – and the Delta Decisions will also be prepared in the meantime. These Delta Decisions will have significant influence on the future of the Netherlands and form the basis for future implementation programmes: *“the Delta Works of the future”*.

The Delta Decisions and related measures are prepared and detailed in sub-programmes. The three nationwide generic programmes Safety, Freshwater and New Urban Developments and Restructuring set out objectives and strategies for safety, freshwater supply and the potential role for spatial planning. These frameworks are detailed for specific regions and where possible combined with regional plans and projects (synergy) in the six regional sub-programmes Rhine Estuary-Drechtsteden, Southwest Delta, IJsselmeer region, Rivers, Coast and Wadden region.

Approach

With the Delta Programme approach the Netherlands is working towards a safe future. We take a flexible stance on changing circumstances. We adjust while preparing for potentially far-reaching measures. We measure, monitor and work with validated delta scenarios for our future orientation. This down-to-earth approach means optimal input precisely when it's needed.

Interconnectivity

The Delta Programme takes an inter-connective approach to finding solutions. It's the only way: our water system forms a single entity and there is strong connection between tasks and measures for flood protection and freshwater supplies via flood protection systems and water level management. If the fresh water supply requires increased water storage in the lakes – this could mean higher water levels, for instance in the IJsselmeer. In turn, safety would require changes to the flood protection systems. Ensuring safety and adequate supplies of freshwater is also connected to the way we build. Spatial planning can help limit the impact of flooding and contribute to safety. By creating water buffers we contribute to the storage and retention of freshwater. An interconnective approach to tasking around safety and freshwater supplies and the role that spatial planning can play here is essential. The Delta Programme does this via the five Delta Decisions, which are under preparation in three generic and six area-based sub-programmes. Water tasking cannot be viewed in isolation from social, economic and ecological developments. The Delta Programme takes an integral, area-based approach – with this safety always comes first.

Cooperation

A number of governmental bodies work together in the Delta Programme – each on the basis of its own responsibility. This multi-governance approach enables interconnectivity of national and regional chances and ambitions with the tasking of the Delta Programme. And this creates a meaningful foundation for decision making. Social organizations and the business community are closely involved in planning.

Three generic sub-programmes with nationwide coverage:

Safety

Freshwater

New Urban Developments and Restructuring

Six area-based sub-programmes:

-  Rhine Estuary-Drechtsteden
-  Southwest Delta
-  IJsselmeer region
-  Rivers
-  Coast
-  Wadden region



-  Higher ground
-  Urban areas
-  Dyke rings and areas outside the dykes susceptible to flooding



This map shows the locations, waterways and bodies of water, engineering structures and projects referred to in the Delta Programme.

Innovation

The Delta Programme also seeks to be a platform for the knowledge and powers of innovation at business communities, knowledge institutions and social organizations.

It aims to deploy this – as early as possible – for better solutions and cost savings. Against this background the Delta Programme can play an important role in stimulating innovation in the water sector.

Delta Act

The legal basis of the Delta Programme is contained in the Delta Act. This also sets out the tasks and authority of the Delta Commissioner and the establishment of the Delta Fund. This legal basis is essential for a targeted approach to flood protection and freshwater supplies as sought by the Netherlands.

Delta Fund

The financial resources for the Delta Programme come from the Delta Fund. This budgetary fund covers the costs of measures and provisions for flood protection and freshwater supplies. Alongside construction and improvement the Delta Fund also provides funding for the management, maintenance and operation of water works.

Delta Commissioner

The Dutch government has appointed a Delta Commissioner for the Delta Programme. The Delta Commissioner leads the Delta Programme, with tasks and authority as set out in the Delta Act. The Delta Commissioner makes an annual proposal for the Delta Programme and ensures progress. To this end the Delta Commissioner works closely with the ministries, provincial and municipal authorities, regional water boards, the business community, social organizations and the general public – while ensuring good all-round communications.

Delta Decisions

Every year the cabinet submits the Delta Programme (as prepared by the Delta Commissioner) to parliament. DP2011, the first Delta Programme, set out the plans of approach for the sub-programmes. DP2012, which was presented on 20 September 2011, contained the analyses of the tasking for safety and freshwater in the short, medium and long terms. DP2013 will focus on investigation of possible solution paths: these will be detailed as promising strategies in DP2014 which in turn will lead to proposals, by the Delta Commissioner, for Delta Decisions in DP2015.



Safety

The level of safety to be provided by our dykes is based on standards developed following the flood disaster of 1953. The population of the Netherlands and capital invested here have both risen since then. The Delta Decision on Safety comprises a proposal for updating flood protection standards. It also comprises the relevant safety strategies.



Freshwater strategy

Our current water system, management and policy appear to have reached their limits. This is fact, not theory – as evidenced by the dry period in 2003 and the dry spring in 2011. The Delta Decision Freshwater comprises a strategy for sustainable and economically optimal freshwater supply – and sets out the necessary measures.



Spatial adaptation

It is important that today's construction does not cause unnecessary future costs or problems. The Delta Decision Spatial adaptation deals with methods and conditions for the robust development or redevelopment of built-up areas in the Netherlands. Spatial development can help limit the impact of flooding, heavy rainfall, extended dry periods and very high temperatures. To this end there will be a national policy framework for development of built-up areas.



Rhine-Meuse delta

The major rivers flowing through Rhine Estuary-Drechtsteden and the Southwest Delta form the crucial transitional point of the Dutch delta – where sea and rivers meet. We protect a whole range of interests here, both in terms of population and economic activity. The Delta Decision for the Rhine-Meuse delta comprises strategies for ensuring (high) water protection and sustainable freshwater supplies in the area – up to 2050 and beyond.



Water level management IJsselmeer region

The IJsselmeer region is a large freshwater basin. The Delta Decision deals with a strategy for water level management in the IJsselmeer region for the period 2015-2050 (with a look ahead to 2100). The strategy is linked to the safety tasking in the area and the role of the IJsselmeer region in freshwater strategy nationwide.

Delta Programme

The Delta Programme is a nationwide programme. The national government, provinces, municipalities and water boards work together with input from social organizations and the business community. The objective is to protect the Netherlands from flooding and to ensure adequate supplies of freshwater for future generations.

The Delta Programme has nine sub-programmes:

- Safety
- Freshwater
- New Urban Developments and Restructuring
- IJsselmeer region
- Rhine Estuary-Drechtsteden
- Southwest Delta
- Rivers
- Coast
- Wadden region

The Delta Programme is directed by a Delta Commissioner, who is the government commissioner for the Delta Programme.

www.deltacommissaris.nl/english

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