



Delta Programme Commissioner

National Delta Programme 2027

Outlines



Adapting to the future

We are working on a climate-resilient Netherlands



Delta Programme Commissioner
Co Verdaas with Member of the
Provincial Executive Arno Vael
during a visit to the Groot
Saeftinghe Border Park and the
Hedwige-Prosper project.
Photo: Marcel Kentin

About the Delta Programme

Wet is getting wetter, dry is getting drier, hot is getting hotter and the weather is getting more erratic. The low-lying Netherlands is vulnerable to climate change. In the Delta Programme, we are working on a safe and liveable delta:

- proper protection against flooding
- resilience to freshwater shortages
- climate-resilient spatial planning

What is the current status of the Delta Programme?
Are the goals achievable? What do we need to focus on?

The Delta Programme Commissioner reports on progress in the annual Delta Programmes. Every six years, we also review the programme's progress in a *periodical evaluation*. The 2027 Delta Programme describes the results of the latest evaluation.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management presented the 2027 Delta Programme to the Dutch Parliament on Prinsjesdag (the state opening of Parliament in the Netherlands). This outline brochure provides a concise overview of the content of the report, primarily for administrators in The Hague and in the regions. As a basis for a healthy discussion.

The National Delta Programme brings together the national government, provincial and municipal authorities, and water authorities. Knowledge institutes and stakeholder organisations are also actively involved.

“Climate change is hitting the low-lying Netherlands hard. To keep the Netherlands safe and liveable, we must make changes to the spatial planning of the use of our country, and make the associated structural investments.”

Delta Programme Commissioner Co Verdaas

Towards a new reality

The abundance of water in and around the Netherlands has brought us a great deal: trade, food, beautiful cities, rich aquatic nature. In the past, we have reclaimed our country from the marshes but it remains a vulnerable delta. New challenges are emerging all the time, especially now the climate is changing.

The Delta Programme Commissioner has three recommendations:

1

Raise awareness in the Dutch population about the vulnerabilities of our delta



Tell the history of this unique small country so that people realise that living with water is not a free ride.

2

Invest in a knowledge agenda



Commit to a knowledge ecosystem that focuses in the long term on the challenges we face. Anchor the monitoring of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) at the EU level.

3

Think carefully about the future of our delta nature



Engage with Brussels about the agenda for Natura 2100.

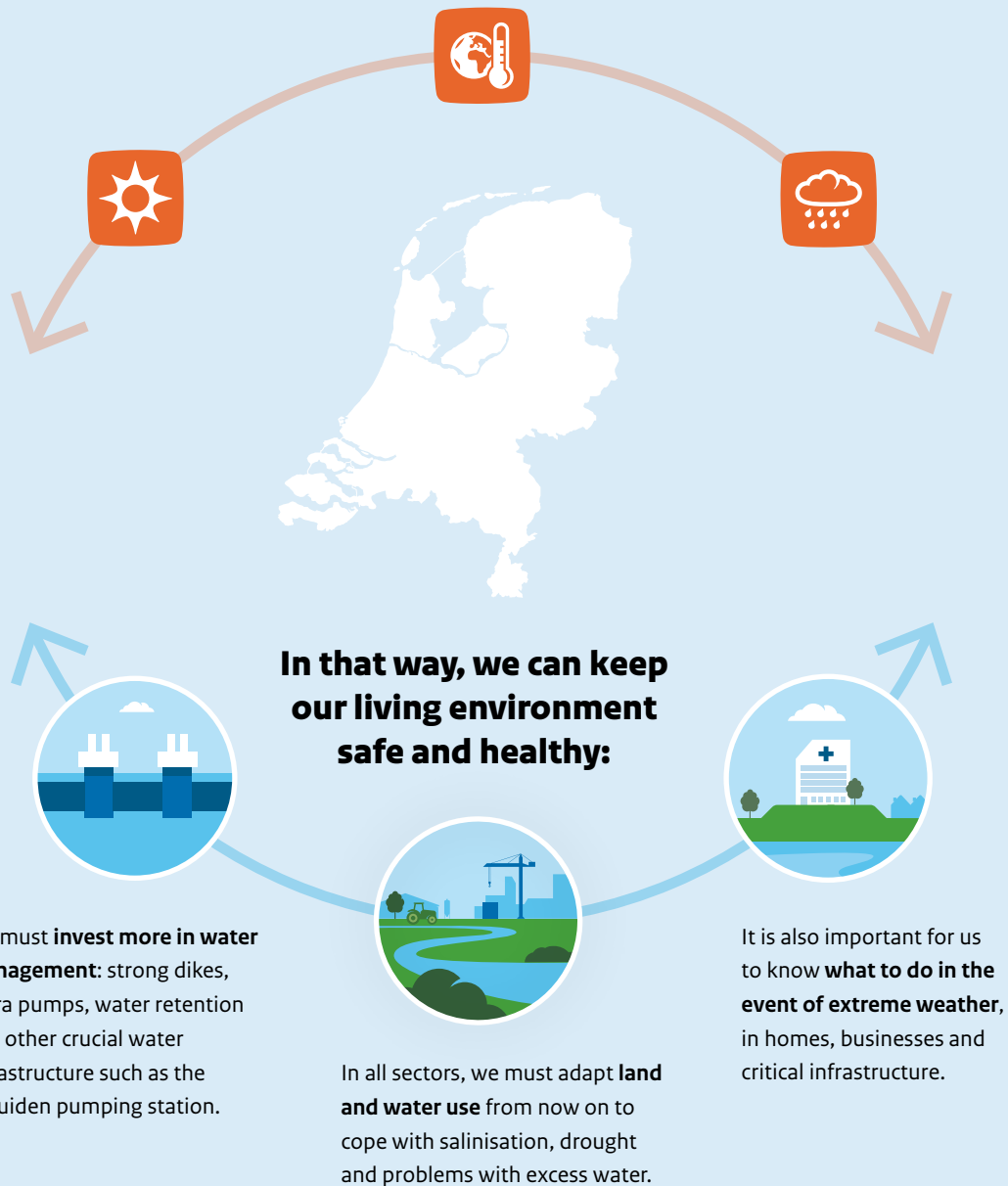
Core Message

From efficient to resilient: adaptation is the only option

We want to continue living and working in a safe and healthy Netherlands. Even now the climate is changing faster than expected. That will only be possible if we change in response to the new climate: investing and adapting. In that way, we will become resilient.

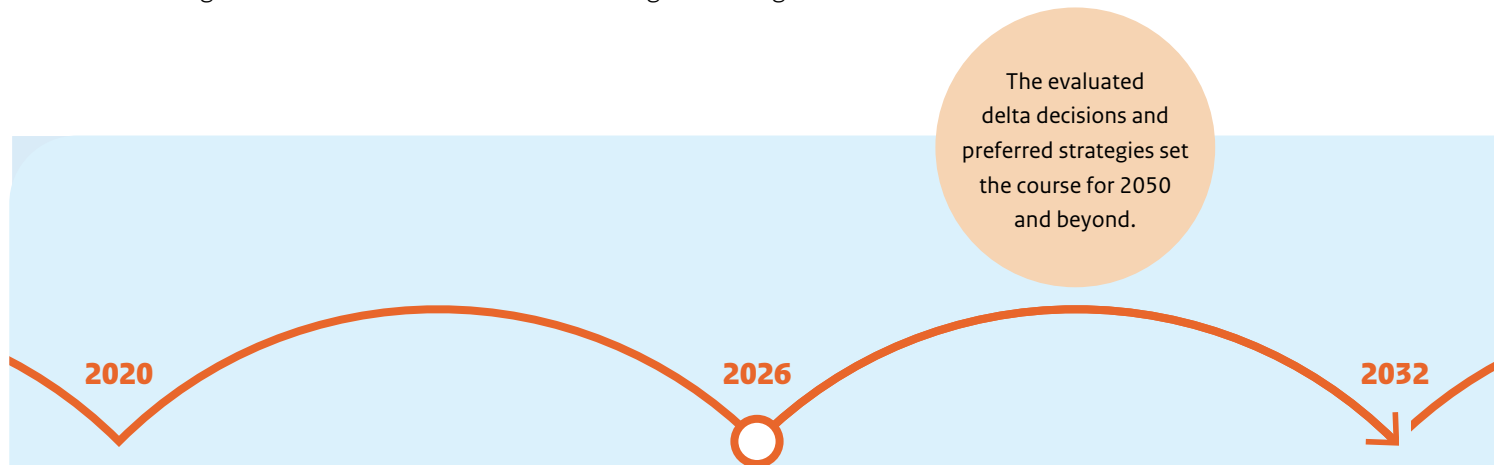
It can be done and it matters

We live in one of the safest deltas in the world thanks to our own efforts *and* the work of past generations. From now on, we must considerably intensify our efforts in order to be resilient to rapid climate change. In the Netherlands, we have the expertise and the resources to deal with this. That makes our country strong and opens up new opportunities, now and for future generations.



What is the periodical evaluation?

A review of the Delta Programme every six years: are we on the right track and doing the right things? We update the delta decisions and preferred strategies on the basis of the latest knowledge and insights.



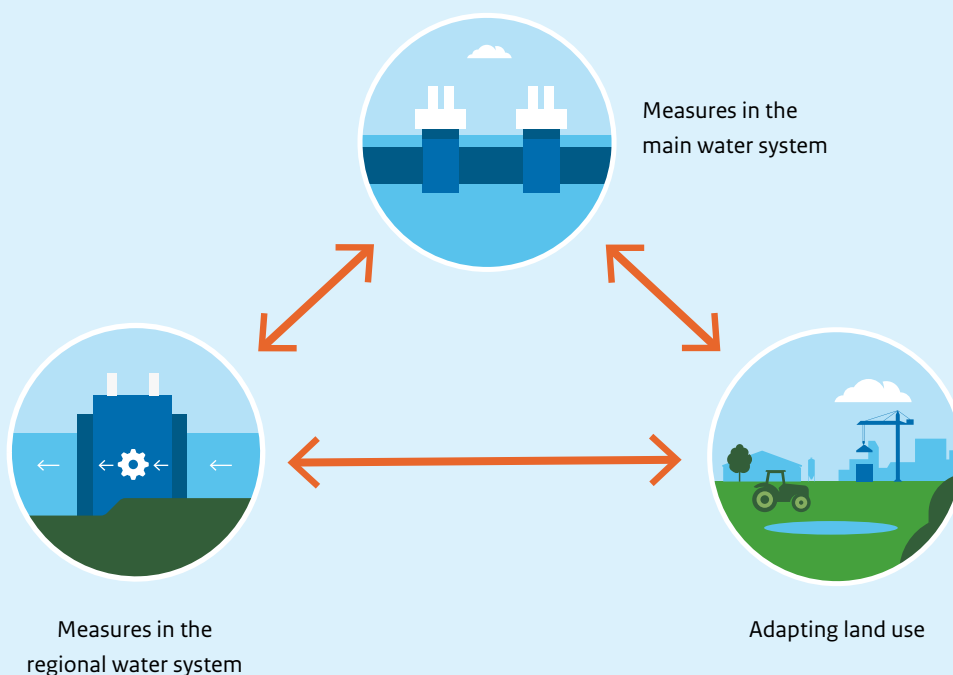
2026 periodical evaluation

The sea level is rising, the availability of fresh water is decreasing, the risk of problems with excess water is increasing, and periods of extreme heat are becoming more frequent. These developments are faster than expected and the challenges are stacking up more and more.

We are tightening up the approach and preparing for the major decisions that lie ahead.

That requires adjustments not only to the water system but also to land use.

There are three types of measure.
We need them all.



Protection against flooding

Objective of the Delta Decision: By 2050, everyone behind the dikes will have the required basic level of protection. The likelihood of large groups of victims and major economic damage will, furthermore, be very low.

Outlines from the periodical evaluation:



The approach for flood risk management is robust and future-resilient.



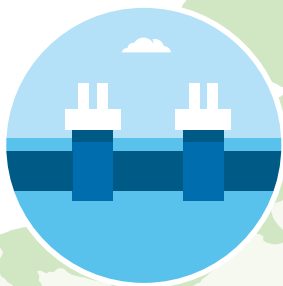
We must press ahead at a rapid pace with strengthening dikes so that they comply with the standards by 2050.



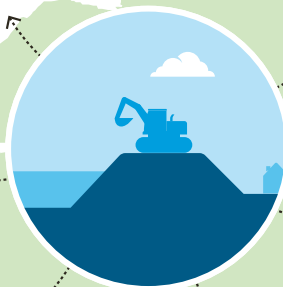
In addition, we will ensure that this approach remains possible in the future: there must be enough room and sand.

This will be needed

We will be continuing to work on coastal maintenance with sand suppletion. And we want to keep sand available for future coastal maintenance.



We are making the preparations in good time for the decisions that will be required when the storm surge defences reach the end of their operational lifespan in the latter half of the century.



We will be continuing the dike upgrade operations in the Flood Protection Programme throughout the country. And we are earmarking space along the rivers and other major waters for future dike upgrades.

Resilience to water shortages

Objective of the Delta Decision:

The Netherlands will be resilient to freshwater shortages by 2050.

Outlines from the periodical evaluation:



The Netherlands will be faced with freshwater shortages with increasing frequency and for longer periods.



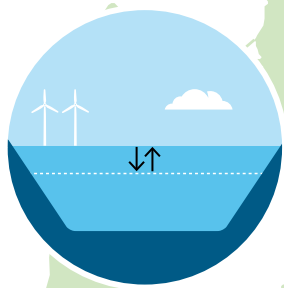
The regions must adapt their spatial planning and land use.



Measures taken in the main water system are not a solution for shortages but they do mitigate them.

This will be needed

We are going to gradually increase the available freshwater buffer in the IJsselmeer area.

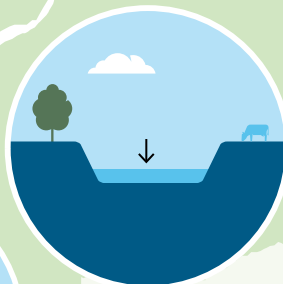


In the regional system, we will buffer water, increase groundwater reserves and use water more efficiently. The regions are already working on this.

We are expanding our knowledge about managing salt intrusion in the Rhine-Meuse estuary through research and pilot projects.



We will use water from the major rivers where it is most needed, depending on the situation.



The central government and the regions are making the expected water shortages transparent and setting specific targets for water availability.

Resilience to problems with excess water, heat, dry periods and the consequences of flooding

Objective of the Delta Decision: The Netherlands will be climate-resilient and water-robust by 2050. Adaptation is an ongoing challenge.

Outlines from the periodical evaluation:



Climate-resilient action is essential in *all* policy-making, (re)development, management and maintenance in order to mitigate the increasing damage caused by extreme weather.



Government authorities are tightening up their approach and establishing clearer arrangements about roles and responsibilities.



A new sub-decision about problems with excess water is being added.

This will be needed

We are continuing with the cyclical approach involving stress tests and risk dialogues.



We are embedding climate adaptation firmly in spatial policy.



Approach at the appropriate level: local, regional/supra-regional or national



The national government is ensuring that critical infrastructure will be resilient to floods and extreme weather by 2050.

We are formulating substantive targets for climate adaptation and monitoring whether we are on track.



All government authorities are working together on long-term funding for spatial adaptation.



New: sub-decision on problems with excess water

The aim: The Netherlands must be resilient and able to cope with problems with excess water caused by extreme rainfall. Among other things, we are working towards more risk-based standards for problems with excess water.



Water-conscious residents and businesses



Prevention through measures in the water system



Making the living environment less vulnerable



Crisis management and risk acceptance



Water-robust recovery

National systemic decisions for future-resilient planning for the major rivers and deltas

Future-resilient planning for the major rivers and deltas is essential for safe water discharge, the availability of fresh water, navigation, nature, ecological water quality, and spatial and economic development.

Outlines from the periodical evaluation:



We are working on rivers and deltas that can cope with low water levels *and* have more room for high water levels.



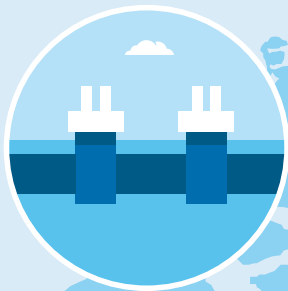
We are taking the steps needed to direct the river water to where it is needed most when water levels are low.



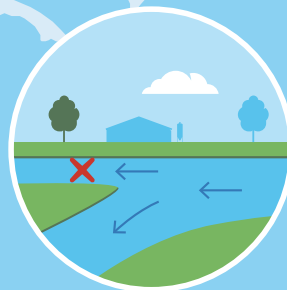
We are maintaining the discharge allocation during high water and earmarking more room, both outside and inside the dikes.

This will be needed

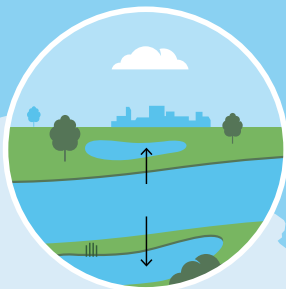
We are increasing the size of the freshwater buffer in the IJsselmeer and Markermeer lakes and optimising the buffer in the Volkerak-Zoommeer.



We will maintain an open and closable Rhine-Meuse estuary until at least 2070.



If the discharge in the Rhine increases, we will maintain the existing agreement: no extra water will be directed to the Lek.



We want to earmark more room along the rivers to accommodate higher river discharge flows and other river functions, and we are clarifying what is, and is not, possible in these areas.



We are committed to active riverbed management with a system of multiple channels along the Waal and with replenishment in the Meuse on the Dutch/Belgian border and the branches of the Rhine. This will benefit all river functions.

Flood risk management and resilience to freshwater shortages in the IJsselmeer area

Objective of the Delta Decision: By 2050, water security in the IJsselmeer region will be safeguarded and social functions will be resilient to freshwater shortages.

Outlines from the periodical evaluation:



For the purpose of resilience to water shortages, we will make better use of the freshwater buffer in the IJsselmeer and Markermeer lakes.



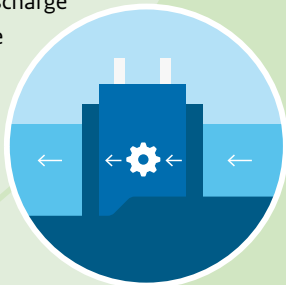
That is not enough: it will also be necessary to retain and save water.



The average winter water level will be maintained, and a 30 cm rise in the average winter water level is being taken into consideration.

This will be needed

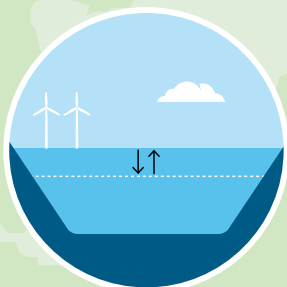
We must invest now in replacing the existing discharge sluices in the Afsluitdijk Barrier Dam and also further increase the discharge capacity by 2045 in the interests of flood risk management.



An even stronger focus on retaining and saving water is a necessity. The regions are already working on this.



We are going to gradually increase the available freshwater buffer in the IJsselmeer and Markermeer lakes.

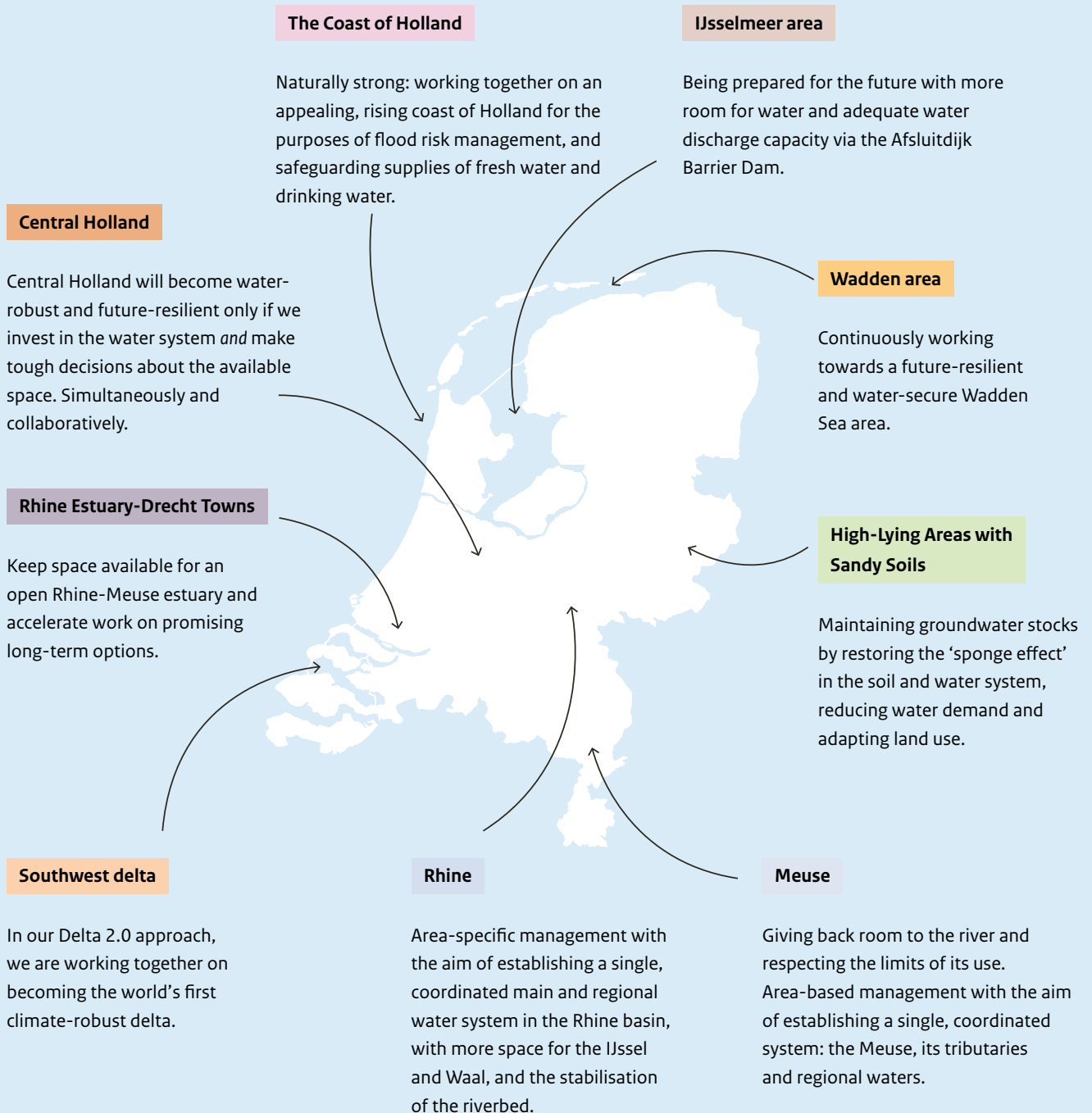


An adequate supply of fresh water via the IJssel River is essential for the freshwater buffer in the IJsselmeer area during the spring (the early spring in particular) and the summer.



Preferred strategies on a region-by-region basis

A climate-resilient country requires operational capacity in the regions. The regions are already working on this on a day-to-day basis. The approach to flood risk management, fresh water and spatial adaptation are formulated in concrete terms in regional preferred strategies. The core points in the evaluation strategies are described below.



The Delta Fund: the financial cornerstone of the Delta Programme

The Delta Fund contains the financing provided by the national government to pay for measures in the Delta Programme. Other government authorities contribute as well.

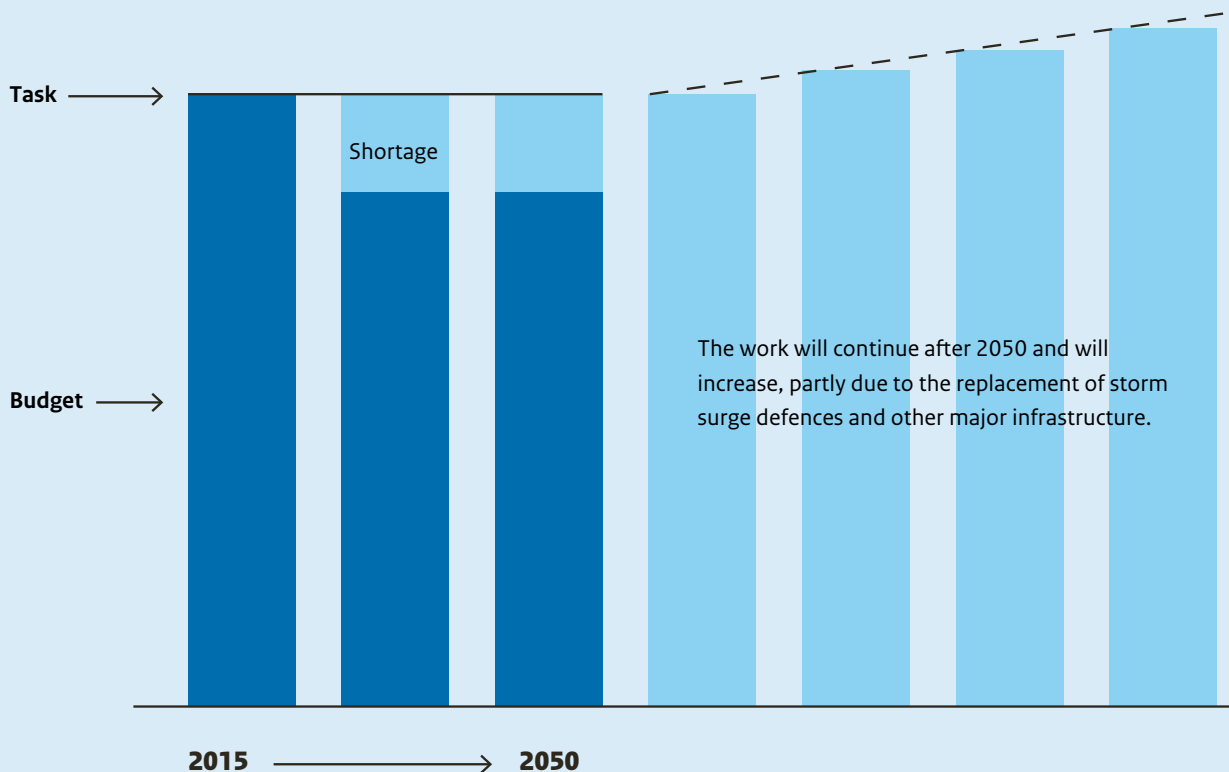
Until 2050

Pressure on the budget will increase until 2050: there is less funding available than is required for the measures in the Delta Programme. The budget depends on the priorities set in the Delta Fund.

The Delta Programme measures (the agenda) are expected to cost a total of approximately € 40 billion until 2050*. The expected budget for the 2015 – 2050 Delta Programme is € 28 billion.

After 2050

Future governments will decide on the budget after 2050.



Credits

Photography

Cover photo: Amsterdam-Noord, houseboats in the Johan van Hasselt Canal, photo by Thomas Klomp
Photo on page 1: Marcel Kentin

Design and coordination

VormVijf (www.vormvijf.nl)

Illustrations and text of the outlines for each chapter

Renske Postma, Tekstbureau Met Andere Woorden
(www.dekrachtvantaal.nl)
Karin Schwandt, VormVijf (www.vormvijf.nl)

Implementation

Delta Programme Commissioner's staff

The Netherlands is a low-lying country with a lot of water. The national Delta Programme protects the Netherlands against flooding, ensures that there are adequate supplies of fresh water, and contributes to climate-resilient and water-robust spatial planning. The website of the national Delta Programme has more information about the work on our delta.

The national Delta Programme brings together the national government, provincial and municipal authorities, and water authorities. Research institutes, stakeholder organisations, the general public and business are also actively involved.

www.deltaprogramma.nl

This is a publication from:

Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security
and Nature
Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning

September 2026