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(Natural Capital Agenda: conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity).

Nr. 85 LETTER FROM THE STATE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND THE STATE SECRETARY FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

To the President of the Second Chamber of Parliament, The Hague, 22 June 2013

We hereby present to you, also on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the "Uitvoeringsagenda Natuurlijk Kapitaal: behoud en duurzaam gebruik van biodiversiteit" (*Natural Capital Agenda: conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*). With this Agenda we meet the request from your Chamber to prepare an implementation agenda on biodiversity (Parliamentary paper 30 825, no. 169). This agenda is based on the international agreements on biodiversity in the Convention on Biological Diversity¹, that provides the basis for the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020. The strategy's objective is to secure resilient ecosystems and ecosystem services that contribute to biodiversity, water and food security, welfare and combating poverty. The agenda is also based on the recommendations in «Groene Groei» (*green growth*), provided by the Dutch Taskforce on Biodiversity and Natural Resources, headed by Hans Alders. The former – then outgoing – government has already responded to these recommendations on 5 July 2012 through the letter «Stand van zaken biodiversiteit-beleid» (*status report on biodiversity policy*) (Parliamentary paper 26 407, no. 63).

Natural Capital globally under pressure

The world population is growing, coupled with growth in the global economy. The combination of the growing global economy and production techniques that are used affects natural capital in the following ways: through the overexploitation of ecosystems and their services, global climate change and the unsustainable use of raw materials.¹ To tackle these threats, a transition to a sustainable global economy – with more sustainable production, fewer emissions and more recycling – is required to secure our natural capital for future generations and thus provide the basis for prosperity and welfare: green growth from an ecological, economic and social perspective.

Position of the Natural Capital Agenda

Developing a nature-inclusive economy, securing international biodiversity and the conservation of nature in the Netherlands are important elements of nature policy. Where policy instruments such as nature legislation, the National Ecological Network (NEN) and Natura 2000 and the Nature Policy

¹«The objectives of this Convention (on Biological Diversity), to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions, are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding».

Plan for the Caribbean Netherlands (Parliamentary paper 30 825, no. 191) are specifically focused on the conservation and strengthening of Dutch nature, the Natural Capital Agenda focuses – both nationally and internationally – on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In doing this, the Agenda is in line with the focus on a circular economy and policy letters on this issue like «Groene Groei, voor een sterke, duurzame economie» (*green growth, for a strong, sustainable economy*) (Parliamentary paper 33 043, no. 14) and the domains as mentioned in that letter, «Van afval naar grondstof» (*from waste to raw material*), «Voedsel» (*food*), «Biobased Economy» and «Energie en Klimaat» (*energy and climate*). The Natural Capital Agenda is also in line with international Dutch policy. In the recent policy document «Wat de wereld verdient» (a Dutch term with two meanings: 'what the world deserves' and 'what the world earns') (Parliamentary paper 33 625, no. 1) by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Netherlands focuses on an important pillar from the coalition agreement: working on sustainable growth, with a special focus on 'inclusivity'. After all, growth and a fair distribution do not automatically go together. *Internationaal Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen (International Corporate Social Responsibility)* is a condition for sustainable and inclusive growth. One aspect of sustainable and inclusive growth is the Dutch focus on an ambitious environmental policy where international agreements are made about the reduction of the CO₂ emissions and about policy to combat the depletion of natural resources. Climate and the environment are integrated into the focal points «Water» and «food security», two main themes of the development co-operation policy that have many aspects in common with biodiversity and as such with the Natural Capital Agenda.

Synergy policy in progress

The coalition agreement emphasises the synergy between nature objectives and other public interests. You have already been informed about the steps taken in the context of synergy between economic development and biodiversity through the abovementioned letter «Stand van zaken biodiversiteitbeleid» (*status of biodiversity policy*). Below are some examples of initiatives that have focused on synergy between economy and biodiversity since the Taskforce's recommendations were published. To help implement the recommendations of the Taskforce Biodiversity and Natural Resources, the government has entered into a Green Deal Biodiversity and Economy with the **Platform Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Economy (BEE)**. The Platform, which receives financial support from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, aims to promote sustainable economic growth through cooperation between the private sector and nature and development organisations in a manner that does not further uses up natural capital.

The Platform stimulates businesses to apply the No Net Loss principle. This means specific adjustments to business operations focused on preservation, good management and recovery of biodiversity and ecosystems. To promote this, a helpdesk was set up in 2012 to advise businesses about preventing, compensating and recovering the impact of their business operations on biodiversity. In 2012 businesses were also invited to apply for the subsidy scheme Biodiversiteit en Bedrijven (*biodiversity and businesses*) to stimulate No Net Loss. Twelve projects were granted co-financing in the first round of this scheme; a second call for applications will be launched in July

2013. The Platform also encourages businesses to actively contribute to the protection of ecosystems, together with nature and environmental organisations and the government.

The **Sustainable Trade Initiative** (*Initiatief Duurzame Handel - IDH*), initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is committed to sustainable production and consumption, and together with the private sector it has made agreements in various – primarily agri – supply chains about sustainability. Supply chains are stimulated to work according to sustainability criteria. Sustainability also extends to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The Natural Capital Agenda complements and supports the Sustainable Trade Initiative activities in the area of sustainable chains.

To get more insight into the impact of businesses and economic sectors on our ecosystem services and biodiversity, and to get a better idea of the opportunities for use of natural capital, several **TEEB² studies** were carried out. Those studies have to result in a specific perspective for action for both businesses and authorities. Several TEEB studies have already been sent to your House, namely those about the Dutch private sector, about the costs and benefits of nature for health, about green and the city and about the island of Bonaire (Parliamentary paper 26 407, nos. 62, 61, 67 and 84). The insights described in these studies will now be put into practice.

Choice of themes for the Natural Capital Agenda

The Agenda comprises several additional activities to reinforce policy in which the Netherlands – on their own territory and in an international context – contribute to achieving the global biodiversity objectives of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the affiliated targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020. This way the Netherlands also contributes to the conservation and sustainable use of important International Public Goods³ (IPGs). The themes chosen for the Agenda were taken from the abovementioned conventions and from the final recommendations of the Biodiversity Taskforce. These are complex themes that aim to achieve both conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In this manner, the government wishes to focus on strengthening the relationship between economy and ecology to a greater extent than before.

The chosen themes are:

- I Sustainable production and consumption: sustainable supply chains
- II Sustainable fisheries and protection of marine biodiversity
- III Sustainable agriculture and protection of biodiversity
- IV Valuing natural capital

Supply chains (I) and agriculture (III) were chosen because of the potential for land-use to conflict with nature. While supply chains are primarily focused on nature in tropical supply countries, the sustainable agriculture theme refers to food production in both a national and an international

² The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)

³ goods that are widely available to everyone (non-exclusivity) and of which the use by one person does not inconvenience the use by someone else (non-rivalry) such as water, air and biodiversity

context. The fisheries theme (II) was also selected because of the potential of fisheries to deplete the resources of the marine ecosystem. Finally, the theme valuing natural capital (IV) was chosen because of the need to attach value to the natural capital in an economic context. For each theme, extra activities will be indicated on top of the current policy. Together these extra activities make up the Natural Capital Agenda.

The Natural Capital Agenda: conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

I Sustainable production and consumption: sustainable chains

Ecosystems are coming under increasing pressure as land use changes to accommodate increasingly large scale agricultural production. Forest clearance and the expansion of irrigated agricultural land under cultivation for example have a great impact on nature and biodiversity. This type of production is expected to increase with the rise of the global population and increasing prosperity. It is therefore essential to make crop cultivation for food and animal feed, for timber and biofuels as sustainable as possible globally. More sustainable land use is vital in order to combine greater yields with lower external inputs like inorganic fertilisers and pesticides and to reduce damage to nature and biodiversity. In the Netherlands, Dutch consumers and businesses have a direct relationship to these production chains originating in biodiversity-rich tropical landscapes, whether it be as end-user, processor, transporter or forwarding agent, or even as producer of these products. The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) helps international trade chains become sustainable by developing result-oriented coalitions of businesses, NGOs, government and other stakeholders. It combines the strengths of public and private organisations, their knowledge, ambitions and interests to achieve sustainable chains using criteria they must meet. One important component of the criteria is the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity. The most important chains are soy, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, tea, timber, biomass and vegetables, fruit and flowers. As well as aiming for sustainable timber production the Netherlands continues to support the EU FLEGT action plan to combat trade in illegal logging and to improve forest management and enforcement in countries exporting to the EU.

General objectives: Whilst using an international approach across the whole chain, by 2020 the most important agricultural raw material chains will meet sustainability criteria for biodiversity and have a great positive impact on the conservation of biodiversity.

Specific action points

1. More timber from sustainably managed forests on the Dutch market

The Green Deal “promoting sustainable forest management” contributes to the conservation of biodiversity in forests. Twenty segments in the timber sector chain: construction, furniture and retail chains, two trade unions, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, Tropenbos International and the government have joined forces to ensure that the proportion of timber from sustainably managed forests on the Dutch market will increase. The Green Deal provides a national platform for the

exchange of knowledge and information and to address issues. The Green Deal was signed on 20 June 2013.

2. Round Table on Sustainable Timber to bring chain parties together

The Netherlands is working with Vietnam and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) on establishing a Round Table for Sustainable Timber. Following the model of the round tables on soy, palm oil and cacao, in the Round Table for Sustainable Timber all parties in the timber chain, plus civil society organisations, will meet to make agreements on sustainable timber production and consumption. As a first step towards a global Round Table, a European Sustainable Tropical Timber Coalition has been set up with the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH). This coalition, comprising organisations with a key role in the sector, seeks to raise demand for legally harvested tropical timber from sustainable forests. This will enable the government to examine how the timber chain can be made more sustainable by talking to important timber suppliers outside the EU in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil and Russia. The Round Table on sustainable timber is targeted to come into effect no later than 2016.

3. Fair agreement on use of plant genetic resources

There are few examples around the world of successful 'Access and Benefit Sharing' (ABS) of genetic material, one of the key themes of the Convention on Biological Diversity¹. To put Access and Benefit Sharing into practice, in line with international agreements, the Dutch Government will support a Green Deal to enable businesses from the Dutch plant breeding sector (vegetables) and stakeholders from a developing country – as owner of the genetic material – to work together on a model project. By the end of 2014 this project must result in an agreement on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of plant genetic material. This agreement can then serve as model for future agreements in the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) context.

4. Sustainable production of biomass for electricity and heating

A crucial factor in the use of biomass for energy purposes is land use: how can we avoid producing biomass that - directly or indirectly - comes at the expense of nature or of land needed for food production? Under the European Renewable Energy Directive (RED) only bio-fuels for transport and bio-liquid flows for energy are subject to minimum sustainability criteria. The government is committed to establishing sustainability criteria for *solid* biomass in the European context as well. The European Commission is currently examining the need to harmonise sustainability criteria for solid biomass flows for energy and has announced that it will publish its proposal in the summer of 2013.

In anticipation of the EU criteria, on 11 October 2012, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs concluded a Green Deal with the energy and biomass sector, whereby the participating parties report annually on the sustainability criteria for the solid woody biomass they use for the production of electricity and heat. To demonstrate

sustainability, the parties will make use of existing certification systems such as NTA8080 and schemes under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC). The first report will be published in the autumn of 2013.

5. Nature to be protected at landscape level in production areas of agricultural raw material

Two pilot projects will be carried out in the agro commodity chains to scale up conservation of biodiversity from farm level to conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems at landscape level. One of the pilots will deal with strengthening biodiversity conservation in cacao cultivation in Ghana and Brazil through collaboration between businesses at regional level and integrated land-use planning. This approach will help create larger areas of valuable, protected nature, to replace the present fragmented landscape of small areas protected at farm level.

A landscape-based approach by farmers associations would in addition provide an opportunity to simplify the complex, labour-intensive certification procedures (including biodiversity elements). It would also have potential for broader funding of nature conservation by grouping payment for several ecosystem services. Where possible it will be tied in with innovative funding initiatives, such as the Green Development Initiative. The pilot projects will start in 2014 and be synchronised with activities supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this area.

II Sustainable fisheries and protection of marine biodiversity

Biodiversity in our oceans is under serious pressure from overfishing and pollution. That also applies to European seas. In the North Sea the most important fish stocks have now recovered, or are recovering, but the fishery sector is still putting other marine biodiversity under pressure. It not only causes wastage from discards, but there is also the problem of bycatches of protected animals and damage to seabed life. By better targeting catches in 'stock management plans', using less seabed disturbing fishery techniques and by banning or limiting fishery in specific areas, the pressure on marine biodiversity can be eased. The new EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP, 2014-2020) lays the foundation for sustainable fisheries. Making fishery more sustainable will significantly contribute to achieving the targets of Natura 2000 and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The scope of the CFP will extend beyond European waters: fishing vessels operating under a European flag will also be bound by CFP agreements on sustainable fisheries, even when fishing outside European waters. In addition they must make every effort to prevent and tackle pollution of the seas.

In September 2013 (postponed to April 2014) the Ministry of Economic Affairs, in collaboration with the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will hold the Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth. The conference is designed to provide concrete action and initiatives for sustainable use and management of the oceans as a source of food and as a rich and vital ecosystem.

General objectives: by 2020 both the aquaculture chain and the wild-caught fish chain will meet international sustainability criteria for stock management and biodiversity; over-fishing within EU waters will have been halted as a condition for restoring fish populations; seabed life and the quality of the marine environment will be improved; international Marine Protected Areas will have been introduced to protect biodiversity and over-fishing and pollution will be prevented and tackled where possible.

Specific action points

6. Better protection of Caribbean coral

In Lac on Bonaire, a lagoon with corals, mangroves, seagrass fields, sea turtles and conch shells, there is synergy between biodiversity and the use of sea for sport, recreation, tourism and fishery. This has been achieved by improving water quality and solving the problems of waste and waste water. The Lac Lagoon forms a part of the Bonaire Marine Park to be nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For better protection of coral on the three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands, from 2014 action will be taken to prevent erosion from land. This erosion is mainly caused by overgrazing by free-ranging cattle. By keeping the cattle in enclosures, the biodiversity of the land will recover. A reserve for marine mammals and sharks will be established in 2014 in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Windward Islands of Saba and Sint Eustatius. The marine mammal reserve is similar to and will link up with other French and American initiatives.

7. Sargasso Sea to become protected area

The government will use diplomatic channels to press for the designation of the Sargasso Sea as Marine Protected Area for the conservation of the European Eel and Caribbean Sea Turtle. By joining other countries led by Bermuda in a Coalition of the Willing for a High Seas Marine Protected Area, agreements will be made in international marine management forums (Law of the Sea, fishery, shipping and mineral extraction) for the permanent conservation of the Sargasso Sea. By proper implementation of the Dutch eel management plan and rules of the CITES Convention, the glass eel is better protected during its migration from the Sargasso Sea to Dutch inland waters. In addition, thanks to its eel management plan the Netherlands provides better sea access for departing fish like the eel. It is expected that it will take approximately five years to achieve MPA status for the Sargasso Sea.

8. Reduce plastic waste in the sea

The Netherlands is working nationally and internationally to prevent floating debris at sea by dealing with it at source. We participate in the steering group of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and in the International Maritime Organisation, where we seek to introduce a total ban on discharging waste from ships.

The European Marine Strategy Framework Directive is examining the possibility of additional measures under the themes 'awareness', 'fisheries', 'shipping', 'beaches', 'catchment areas', and 'production chains'. This should lead to a programme of measures in 2015. The programme

includes examining possibilities and developing measures to reduce micro-plastics, and placing the issue on the agenda of the EU Environment Council.

It is important to work together with the various stakeholders to explore how to deal with plastic at sea. As well as involving the sectors in the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, a business-oriented strategy will be developed with Platform BEE and other relevant partners. By including the issue of plastic at sea as a topic in the "innovation relay" to be organised in October 2013, innovative ideas from the private sector can be used to address the social and economic challenges posed by the plastic soup.⁴

9. Recovery of degraded ecosystems in the marine environment

By regenerating the ecosystem of the North Sea, lost biodiversity will be restored. This will also safeguard its function as breeding ground for fish. In synergy with activities like sand extraction, work will be done to restore the shellfish beds in one of the North Sea's protected areas. The shell substrate can in turn serve as breeding ground for recovering biodiversity. A first pilot project will start in 2015.

III Sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation

Around the world, as well as in the Netherlands, most land used for economic purposes is devoted to agriculture. The rise of the global population and increasing food requirements has created a huge demand for agricultural land and places serious pressure on biodiversity. However, agriculture and biodiversity are mutually dependent: agricultural production exploits the functions of biodiversity, and at the same time production methods influence the functioning of the whole ecosystem. A robust agricultural system of value to society can be created by placing agriculture in a broader perspective and learning to value other services in addition to production. This means seeking synergy between agriculture and biodiversity. The "greening" element of the new Common Agricultural Policy (2015-2020) provides a good framework, as biodiversity receives greater attention by stimulating sustainable agricultural production and facilitating nature management. The new system for agricultural nature management is better suited to international biodiversity objectives. Working with farmers groups will create greater cohesion in management. The measures will be better targeted to the areas where they are expected to make the greatest contribution to improving biodiversity. In addition the CAP can be employed to stimulate green innovation, such as functional agricultural biodiversity in agricultural areas, so that agricultural production can make better use of the ecosystem and become less dependent on external imports into the system such as inorganic fertilisers, crop protection products and overhead irrigation. In striving for food security in developing countries, agricultural development programmes are being established in areas of great biodiversity. Sound land use planning in these areas - at a landscape level - should contribute to the synergy between food and biodiversity.

⁵ For detailed information about the integrative approach to deal with plastic soup in different domains, see our letter to your House, <<Toelichting aanpak zwerfvuil op zee >> (*explanation on addressing floating debris at sea*) (IENM/BSK-2013/64496) and the letter on waste policy (IENM/BSK-2013/69515).

In 2014 the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will organise an international conference on biodiversity and food. The purpose of this conference is to further explore the relationship between biodiversity and food, and raise the profile and promote the concept of integrated landscape approach.

General objectives: by 2020 sustainable agricultural management will be in place to ensure the conservation of biodiversity. In an international context, model products for integrated land use planning and ecosystem recovery will be set up to help create a sustainable balance between agriculture for food production and biodiversity.

Specific action points

10. Less damage to nature from crop protection products

The recent memorandum 'Gezonde Groei, Duurzame Oogst' (*healthy growth, sustainable harvest*), (Parliamentary paper 27 858, no. 146) stressed the relationship between crop protection and biodiversity. It concluded that misuse of crop protection products can damage biodiversity. There has recently been much interest in the effects of crop protection products on bees.

The government's aim is to limit the negative effects of crop protection products on biodiversity as much as possible. The government will therefore stimulate the use of non-chemical products and promote the admission of basic substances and low-risk products. The sector will contribute by drawing up plans of action for the promotion of integrated crop protection and technical measures that can be taken to reduce spray drift.

Businesses are required to use spraying equipment with 75% drift-reducing techniques on the whole plot of land. This helps prevent non-target organisms from being exposed to crop protection products.

The Netherlands will actively contribute to the updating of the European guidelines on assessing risks to bees from crop protection products. To protect bee populations and bring Dutch measures into line with the EU Decision, in September 2013 the government will take measures to withdraw and revise rules on allowing certain products. In addition, the government, in collaboration with stakeholders, will develop an action programme for bee health in 2013 and implement it together with all interested parties.

The sector will provide information about the risks involved in the use of crop protection products, especially for bees. The government will also encourage farmers to provide ecosystem services by developing field margins specifically designed for functional agricultural biodiversity. Sustainable crop protection will also be promoted internationally.

11. Restoration of degraded ecosystems on land

When ecosystems are restored, their benefits can once again be utilised. For example, in areas where vegetation is restored, water management improves and agriculture and water extraction

can again be practised. International research by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) has mapped out the degraded areas around the world. We are examining the potential of restoration of degraded areas together with the private sector and other potential financiers. A number of international model projects will be carried out with the private sector. The pilots must demonstrate that the private sector can and is willing to contribute to the restoration of ecosystems and that a degraded area can be turned around and transferred into an area of productive and diverse biodiversity with a balanced water system. Two model projects will be set in motion before 2015.

12. Biodiversity and food production in balance

A growing global population and increasing prosperity are placing ever greater pressure on land and water for food production and by extension on biodiversity. The challenge facing us is to produce enough food while protecting biodiversity, for example by separating functions so that existing agricultural land can be used more intensively, rather than developing new agricultural land at the expense of nature. This would enable large areas of nature to be conserved and remain interconnected. Greater biodiversity in agricultural areas is essential for food production.

Two landscape approach projects will be carried out in developing countries to serve as model for the integration of food production and nature in areas where much can be achieved in protecting biodiversity and where they can be tied in with our Embassy's food security or water programmes. Two model projects were implemented in 2015; the conference on food and biodiversity will be held in 2014 and will deliver concrete products to create better synergy and integration between food production and biodiversity.

IV Valuing natural capital

Rich biodiversity provides valuable services directly or indirectly to society and to the economy. There is insufficient knowledge about the ecosystems we make use of in business processes in our country and they are therefore not assigned their true value. The government is therefore developing instruments to assess the state of our national ecosystems and the services they may provide and examines the possibility of assigning value to these services. Giving these services an economic value will enable us to obtain insight into the impact of these systems and our dependence on them and so raise our awareness. Within the European Union and internationally an increasing amount of knowledge in this area is being developed and shared.

General objectives: by 2020 all ecosystem services in the Netherlands will have been identified, along with recognition of their contribution to the economy and this will be incorporated into the decision-making process of government and the private sector.

Specific action points

13. A digital atlas of our ecosystem services

Following the example of the United Kingdom the Netherlands is conducting a National Ecosystem Assessment. Its results, providing information about the functioning of the ecosystems and services offering potential will be collated in the Digital Atlas of Natural Capital (DANK). Government bodies can use the information to plan sustainable area development when deciding the best use of natural capital, and addressing conflict of interests between different users in a specific area. Moreover it is at a macro-economic level possible to obtain a true picture of the positive and negative impact of economic activities on the quality and quantity of products and services we obtain from nature (the natural capital invoice). Businesses can make use of this information to reduce their impact on nature and make optimal use of natural capital in their business operation, for instance in agriculture (natural pest and disease control measures, soil fertility) and in healthcare. We plan to deliver the first operational version at the end of 2014. This will be further developed in the period up to 2020.

14. Application of TEEB studies

TEEB studies will be carried out to clarify the action required by government and the private sector; they will provide insight into the economic value of ecosystem services. In addition to studies already published, this year the TEEB Environment study of the Netherlands and in 2014 the TEEB study of Dutch trade chains and TEEB studies on Saba and Sint-Eustatius will be submitted to parliament. As a follow up, a two-year programme will be established to be implemented by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL). This programme will incorporate the information from the TEEB studies in the decision-making for the Common Agricultural Policy and the Delta programme. The TEEB programme will involve the development of usable products like handbooks and training courses.

15. Natural capital and economy in statistics

In March 2013 the UN agreed on Natural Capital Accounting, a statistical framework to expand the existing environmental invoice with indicators for ecosystem services, with quantifiable values or otherwise. This framework should make it possible to further quantify, and make a timescale for, the relationship between economy and natural capital (Green Growth). The UN has invited countries to apply this framework in order to test its feasibility. The Netherlands will register for this pilot. A progress report on this pilot project will be given in mid-2016.

16. Dutch private sector estimates the value of Natural Capital

By supporting Platform BEE, the government will stimulate initiatives to identify the impact of businesses on biodiversity and ensure it becomes part of business decision-making. In addition the government will stimulate businesses to account for Natural Capital, for instance by supporting a system in 2014 to create biodiversity benchmarking between businesses and business sectors. The government will also support initiatives around True Pricing. This means stating a fictional price alongside normal pricing. The fictional price gives greater insight into the real cost, for example

including the cost of exploiting biodiversity. This gives greater transparency about costs *not* included in the market price of a product.

Raising awareness

On the recommendation of the Taskforce on Biodiversity, there will be a focus on raising awareness of biodiversity in relation to the four themes and items on the agenda. Awareness raising, including education and knowledge dissemination, will be included in the << *Duurzaam Door*>> (*sustainable through...*⁵) programme, which provides suitable scope for it. The government wishes to use this programme to build effective, innovative networks between government, business, civil society, research and education institutes and the public, and to connect demand-driven form of work with knowledge and communication issues relating to the abovementioned themes. In 2014 the themes and the work done on them will be included in the *Duurzaam Door* program. Other awareness-raising programs will also be implemented, including communication around the TEEB studies.

Progress report

We will inform you about the progress of the actions in the Natural Capital Agenda in mid-2016.

Responsibility and Financing

The Ministries of Economic Affairs and of Infrastructure and the Environment will jointly execute this implementation agenda. There is close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the international agenda items. The execution of the implementation agenda will be financed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment. Wherever possible and relevant, this will happen in cooperation with the businesses and civil society organisations involved.

In conclusion

The Natural Capital Agenda was prepared as a joint effort of the Ministries with responsibilities in the areas of biodiversity and, where relevant, is in tune with the concerns of civil society organisations and the private sector. The agenda does not claim to be comprehensive. The Natural Capital Agenda presents a list of activities that can be undertaken on top of current policy by the central government and social partners to achieve the ultimate objective: conservation and sustainable and equitable use of natural capital in 2020.

Signed,

The State Secretary for Economic Affairs, S.A.M. Dijkma

The State Secretary for Infrastructure and the Environment, W.J. Mansveld

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⁵ Editor's note: the full title of this programme is *Sustainable through social innovation for a green economy*