

Review of the implementation of EU-FAS policy in Member States of EU-Netherlands

This report was prepared by **Ellen Bulten** (WUR).

I- Executive summary

The Netherlands has a well-functioning, privatised advisory landscape where farmers are seen and treated as entrepreneurs. Implementation of EU-FAS in The Netherlands connects closely to this existing advisory landscape and has not played an important role in the functioning or shaping of farm advisory services in The Netherlands. EU-FAS is implemented nationally and is directed at all farmers in The Netherlands. Individual advisors can be registered as EU-FAS advisors through a government-appointed association. The Netherlands Entrepreneurial Agency (working under the auspices of the ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy) publishes (updated versions of) this registry on their website, making it publicly available. No national or European funding is made available for EU-FAS implementation in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has only selected the mandatory domains for EU-FAS implementation. Implementation in the Netherlands is therefore limited and has not had significant impact on the Dutch agricultural advisory system.

II- Extensive description of the implementation of the EU-FAS in the Netherlands

A) Introduction – General overview about the EU-FAS implementation

The Netherlands has a well-established farm advisory system that has been privatised in the nineties. Before this privatisation, there was close (government-regulated) collaboration between education, advice and research. The results from research were translated in both educational programmes and farm advice services. This resulted in a certain homogeneity among farms. However, nowadays only education remains public while both the advisory systems as well as research in the Netherlands are privatised. This means that the government does not regulate or dictate farm advice services. Instead, entrepreneurship among farmers is highlighted and stimulated, resulting in a lot of diversity among farms. This focus on entrepreneurship also translates in the way farmers seek advice: while cross-compliance of course remains mandatory, farmers are free to choose whether or not to hire an advisor. The Dutch government does not steer farmers in a certain direction, but farmers judge by themselves whether or not to involve (an) advisor(s) in their business.

Since the Dutch government wanted to keep the general structure of the advisory landscape, implementation of EU-FAS connects closely to the pre-existing, privatised knowledge structure. The EU-FAS has therefore not played an important role in the functioning or shaping of farm advisory services in The Netherlands, but is instead incorporated into already existing advice services.

Concluding: the Dutch government values the responsibility that farmers bear for their own business operations and does not want to intervene much in an already well-functioning advisory market (Tweede Kamer, 2012).

B) “Boundaries” of the implementation of the EU-FAS regulation

Implementation of EU-FAS is done nationally, across the whole of the Netherlands. As stated in the introduction, this implementation connects to the already existing advisory system as closely as possible. Therefore, no entirely new advisory system was established during EU-FAS implementation. From 2012 till 2017, the ministry of Economic Affairs (now: ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy) was in charge of implementation and regulation of EU-FAS. Agricultural matters were the responsibility of this ministry. Since 2017, however, the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is in charge of implementation and regulation of EU-FAS in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) is the executive body, working under the auspices of the ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy (RVO, n.d. a). RVO is also in charge of the direct payments, instructed by the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and with accountability towards the European Union.

RVO provides a list of all accredited suppliers (RVO, n.d. b). These advisors provide advice on the 5 mandatory focus areas (i.e. cross compliance, practices beneficial for climate and the environment, farm modernisation, water directive, pesticide directive). The list consists of individual advisors from private advisory or bookkeeping firms. The lists indicates for each advisor which advisor provides advice on which focus area(s). EU-FAS in the Netherlands is directed at all farmers in the Netherlands, no specific target group was identified.

The Netherlands has not implemented Measure 2.0 (Regiebureau POP, 2018; Vogelzang et al., 2017).

1. “Identity” of the suppliers selected for the implementation of the EU-FAS regulation

There are no specific agricultural advisors in the Netherlands who solely provide advice on EU-FAS. Instead, a number of (individual) agricultural advisors have added EU-FAS to their domain of expertise upon implementation of EU-FAS in the Netherlands. As mentioned in the introduction, agricultural advisory services in the Netherlands are privatised. There are a number of different parties that fulfil the role of agricultural advisor in the Netherlands. These parties include private advisory firms specified in agricultural advice and independent agricultural advisors. Banks may also offer advisory services, also being an accredited supplier of EU-FAS advice. Moreover, there are a number of accountancy firms in the Netherlands that also have accredited EU-FAS advisors. Note that accredited advisors provide advice about EU-FAS in addition to providing advice in their area of expertise. Moreover, rather than accrediting an organisation as a whole, individual advisors receive a certificate if they meet certain requirements. These requirements will be further elaborated upon in section 2.3.

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) has published a register of certified advisors who can provide advice about EU-FAS (see RVO n.d. b). For each advisor, the register indicates his/her titles, company that the advisor works for and the EU-FAS domains the advisor is specialised in. To give in indication, table one presents the four first accredited suppliers on the list and their indicated expertise on EU-FAS. It is interesting to note that nearly all accredited suppliers on the list listed Farm Modernisation (domain c) as their area of expertise. The Netherlands has not selected any of the optional domains.

Scope of EU-FAS		Accredited supplier #1	Accredited supplier #2	Accredited supplier #3	Accredited supplier #4
<i>Mandatory</i>	(a) CROSS-COMPLIANCE <i>Standards for Good agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC)</i>			x	x
	(b) PRACTICES BENEFICIAL FOR THE CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT <i>(chap. 3 – Reg. No 1307/2013) Crop diversification, Permanent Grassland, Ecological areas</i>			x	x
	(c) FARM MODERNISATION, <i>Competitiveness, Market, Entrepreneurship</i>	x	x	x	x
	(d) WATER DIRECTIVE <i>Article 11(3) of directive 2000/60/EC</i>				
	(e) PESTICIDE DIRECTIVE <i>Good practices for pesticide use & Integrated pest management. Article 11(3) of Directive 2000/60/EC and article 14 of directive 2009/128/EC</i>				x
<i>Optional</i>	(a) DIVERSIFICATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES <i>and conversion of farms (to organic farming??)</i>				
	(b) RISK MANAGEMENT <i>Vis-à-vis natural disasters; catastrophic events, animal & plant diseases</i>				
	(c) AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES & ORGANIC FARMING <i>Articles 28(3) and 29(2) of Regulation No 1305/2013</i>				
	(d) INFORMATION related to CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY, WATER				

Table 1 – Indication of domains of expertise of accredited suppliers in the Netherlands (first four accredited supplier on the national register)

2. “Control” of the quality of the services implemented under the EU-FAS regulation

The ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality appointed the Association of Agricultural Business Advisors (VAB) as the only organisation that can recognise agricultural business advisors under FAS. Only advisors who are a member of the VAB qualify to become FAS-advisors. These advisors are included in the official FAS register, which is accessible through the website of the RVO (see RVO n.d. b).

Every member of the VAB needs to get a certificate. In order to obtain such a certificate, members have to write a personal ambition plan, focused on professional knowledge and personal traits. Of course aspiring members have to meet certain requirements before they can become a VAB-member (VAB, n.d. a). These requirements are:

- II- (applied) scientific education degree or level of thinking
- III- At least 5 years demonstrable work experience
- IV- At least 3 years of experience working independently as an agricultural advisor
- V- Willing to develop and capable to be critical about own advice
- VI- Having professional knowledge and capable to place advice in the broader perspective of an agricultural business
- VII- Attention for both the rational as well as the irrational sides of advice
- VIII- A member works for at least 50% for primary agricultural business (directly or indirectly)

Once an advisor is a VAB-member, they can score so called Permanent Education (PE) points. Each member has to score an average of 20 points per year over a 4-year period (10 points related to professional knowledge, 4 points related to skills and 6 points either on knowledge or skills). VAB members who want to be included in the FAS registry have to provide access to the overview of their PE points. If a member fails to score enough points or fails to give access to the overview of their points, they will be removed from the FAS registry (VAB, n.d. b).

In terms of monitoring the implementation of EU-FAS in The Netherlands, there is no extensive monitoring programme. Each year, the VAB reports back to the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in the form of a ‘progress interview’. During this meeting, VAB and the ministry discuss the results of the past year and express their expectations for the coming year.

1. “Attributes” of the services implemented under the EU-FAS regulation

Since EU-FAS regulation is merged with pre-existing services and networks, no new resources were provided or developed other than making available the national register with accredited suppliers.

2. “Financing” of the services implemented under the EU-FAS regulation

Since measure M2.0 is not implemented in the Netherlands, this section is not relevant. No budget (national nor EU) was allocated to implementation of EU-FAS in the Netherlands.

III- Effectiveness of EU-FAS

A) Facts and figures about EU-FAS implementation

In principle, all farmers have access to EU-FAS advisory services through the (open access) registry of accredited advisors on the website of the Netherlands Entrepreneurial Agency. According to the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality as of 2016, 10000 farmers were reached. As of September 2019, 150 individual advisors are registered in the national EU-FAS registry. Most advisors provide advice about more than one domain, while the overwhelming majority of advisors (145 out of the 150) provide advice about the third domain (modernisation).

B) In-depth analysis of one domain

EU-FAS has not impacted the supply of advisory services in the Netherlands, since EU-FAS was merged with existing services and networks. Both farmers and advisors in the Netherlands are highly educated and are generally aware of national and EU regulations. To keep advisors up-to-date about regulations, the VAB provides courses for example on circular water utilisation.

IV- Discussion

EU-FAS implementation has not impacted farm advisory regimes in the Netherlands significantly. Implementation of EU-FAS in the Netherlands has therefore not really had any significant positive or negative effects. Because of the minimal implementation, advisors raise the question: what exactly is the added value of being part of the Farm Advisory System? The Netherlands Entrepreneurial Agency has already started to communicate more about the existence of the FAs registry towards farmers. Future implementation of FAS in the Netherlands will likely focus more on integrating advice regarding national agricultural policy (most importantly moving towards a circular agriculture) with EU-FAS advisory services.

Factsheet about FAS assessment in The Netherlands

Some Key facts about CAP implementation in The Netherlands

- Number of farmers in the country.....
- Share of 2nd pillar in CAP expenditure.....
- Share of Knowledge measures (M01&M02) in the 2nd pillar of CAP- Planned expenditure per farmer (M01&M02).....

Some Key facts about the implementation of the EU-FAS in France

Pillar one (Regulation n°#)

Level of application

- Regional National

Domain selected for the EU-FAS regulation

Mandatory

- Cross-compliance
- Payment for environment & climate
- Modernisation
- Pesticides directive
- Water directive

Optional

- Diversification
- Risk management
- Organic
- Information on climate

Types of suppliers accredited

Indicate the type of suppliers accredited

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private independent consultant/firms <input type="checkbox"/> SME or start-ups <input type="checkbox"/> Public extension organisation <input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Charities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chambers of agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers' rings or associations <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers' cooperatives <input type="checkbox"/> Private firms or retailers (inputs/outputs) ▪ Bookkeepers ▪ Other (specify) banks |
|---|---|

Method required for advisory services

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> One to one on the farm <input type="checkbox"/> One to one outside the farm <input type="checkbox"/> Small group advice on the farm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone helpdesk <input type="checkbox"/> General information via Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Publication (paper copies) |
|--|---|

<input type="checkbox"/> Small group outside the farm	<input type="checkbox"/> No requirement
Conditions required to be accredited for advisory organisation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Competences of advisors <input type="checkbox"/> Training of advisors <input type="checkbox"/> Data base	<input type="checkbox"/> Networks <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring of advice activities <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge platforms
Target public (categories of farmers or farm workers)	
Target group specified..... <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="checkbox"/> Farms with more than 15000 € direct support <input type="checkbox"/> Smaller farms..... <input type="checkbox"/> Other farms' criteria	<input type="checkbox"/> Zoning criteria..... <input type="checkbox"/> Other criteria.....
Pillar Two	
Use of measure M02..... <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Number of beneficiaries.....	
Average expenditure per farmer.....	
Domain selected	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cross-compliance <input type="checkbox"/> Paiement for environment & climate <input type="checkbox"/> Modernisation <input type="checkbox"/> Pesticides directive <input type="checkbox"/> Water directive <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Health <input type="checkbox"/> Farms setting up for the first time	

List of references

Regiebureau POP (2018). *Plattelandsontwikkelingsprogramma voor Nederland 2014-2020 (POP3)*. Retrieved from : https://regiebureau-pop.eu/sites/default/files/field/file-attachment/Programme_2014NL06RDNP001_5_1_nl.pdf

RVO (n.d. a). *About us*. Retrieved on 09-05-2019 from : <https://english.rvo.nl/about-us>

RVO (n.d. b). *Erkende agrarische bedrijfsadviseurs*. Retrieved on 09-05-2019 from : <https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/agrarisch-ondernemen/agrarische-administratie-en-registratie/erkende-agrarische-bedrijfsadviseurs>

Tweede Kamer (2012). *Herziening van het Gemeenschappelijk Landschapsbeleid*. Retrieved on 13-05-2019 from : <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-28625-146.html>

VAB (n.d. a). *Informatie over het lidmaatschap*. Retrieved on 09-05-2019 from : <https://www.vabnet.nl/leden-en-adviseurs/lid-woorden/informatie-en-tarieven.html>

VAB (n.d. b). *Systeem, criteria, registratie en controle*. Retrieved on 09-05-2019 from : <https://www.vabnet.nl/leden-en-adviseurs/voor-leden/pe-punten.html>

Vogelzang, T., Berkhout, P., & Jager, J. (2017). *GLB-bestedingen in Nederland* (No. 2017-074). Wageningen Economic Research.