

GENERAL POLICY ON WASTE

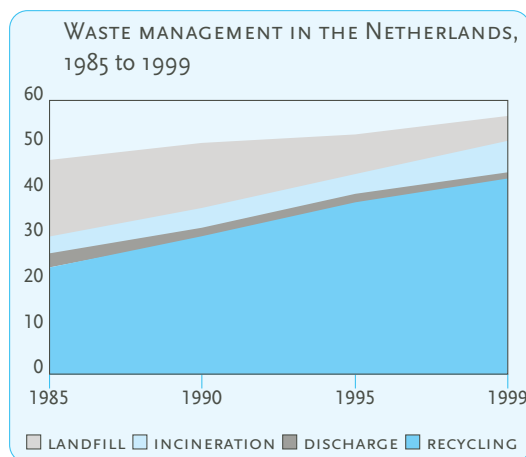
WASTE IN THE NETHERLANDS

Waste policy: historical development

The main foundations of the present Dutch policy on waste were laid during 1988-1991. Seminal developments during these years included the publication of the Memorandum on Prevention and Recycling, the introduction of producer responsibility, the creation of the Waste Consultation Body and the signing of the Packaging Covenant. In the late 1980s waste management was still practised only on a small scale, with little regard for environmental protection. Following a number of incidents involving waste, a new waste management programme was drawn up. This was designed to reduce the undesired environmental impacts of waste management activities, promote recycling and limit the generation of waste through prevention.

Cornerstones of Dutch waste policy

The uncontrolled spread of waste is harmful to the environment and to human health. The government therefore regards it as its task to devise and maintain an environmentally sound policy on waste. Waste management policy focuses on tackling the problem at source by preventing waste from occurring in the first place. Where waste cannot be prevented, as much as possible should be recycled. Non-recyclable waste must be disposed of in such a way that the risks to the environment are acceptable ('leak-proof' disposal).



LANSINK'S LADDER

An order of preference for managing waste, known as 'Lansink's Ladder' after the MP who proposed it, is laid down in the Environmental Management Act: prevention is the top rung (most preferred option), and landfill the bottom rung (least preferred option).

The principle underlying this waste management hierarchy is that the amount of waste going to landfill should be minimised, due to the space requirements involved, the need for aftercare in

perpetuity, the loss of material resources and the emissions from landfills. It should be noted that landfills account for 35% of all methane emissions in the Netherlands. Since methane contributes some 15% to the greenhouse effect, this means that landfills are responsible for about 5% of the total greenhouse effect.

Lansink's Ladder

1. prevention
2. design for prevention and design for beneficial use
3. product recycling (re-use)
4. material recycling
5. recovery for use as fuel
6. disposal by incineration
7. disposal to landfill

Dutch waste policy is based on this waste management hierarchy, and involves:

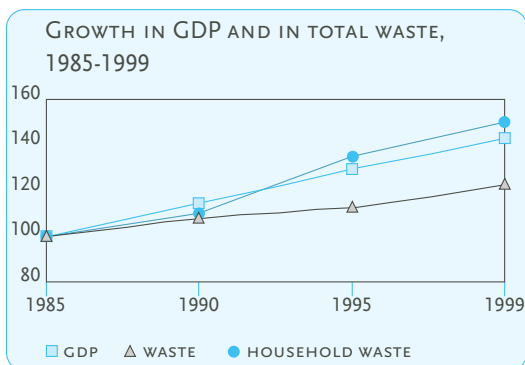
- devising and adopting instruments to encourage or enforce prevention and recycling and reduce the waste going to landfill;
- setting environmental and policy constraints for waste management;
- creating a framework for waste management planning at national level;
- spelling out the responsibilities of producers for the disposal of their products in the waste phase, and
- regulating imports and exports of waste.

Prevention and recycling

Waste prevention involves preventing or reducing the waste actually generated, and is one of the main pillars of waste management policy. A whole range of instruments, both regulatory and non-regulatory, have been deployed to encourage waste prevention. In the case of commercial / industrial waste these form part of an integrated set of measures which also include energy con-

servation, water conservation, etc. They are set out in an implementation programme drawn up by the Association of Provincial Authorities, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. Financial instruments such as the landfill tax promote waste prevention and discourage landfill.

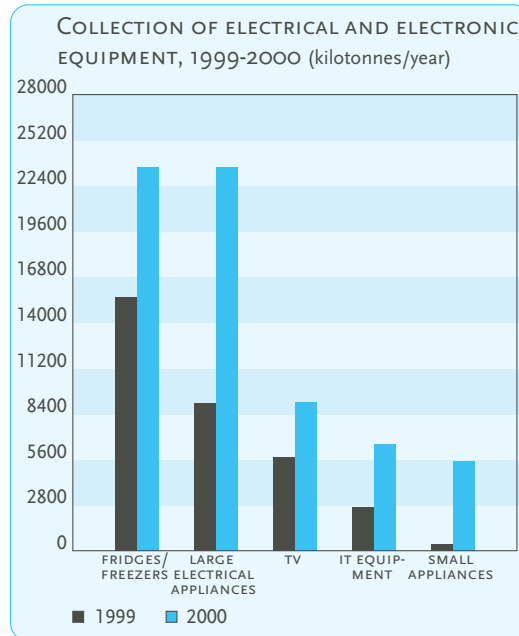
It is difficult to measure the results of prevention initiatives because waste volumes are also affected by other factors, such as economic and demographic trends. However in recent years the volume of waste has grown considerably less rapidly than the economy as a whole. Bucking this overall trend, waste volumes from households and the trade, services and government sectors have broadly kept pace with economic growth.



PRODUCT AND MATERIAL RECYCLING

Product and material recycling are the third and fourth rungs of Lansink's Ladder. Various instruments have also been adopted to promote recycling.

Material recycling is fostered by separating waste streams at source. The Environmental Management Act requires local authorities to establish systems for the separate collection of kitchen and garden waste from households. Producers and importers can also be required to take back and reprocess their products in the waste phase, as required, for example, under the White and Brown Goods (Disposal) Decree. Product recycling (re-use) is encouraged by, for example, introducing refundable deposits.



CONSTRAINTS APPLYING TO WASTE MANAGEMENT

Constraints applying to the management of waste have been laid down in various decrees. One example is the Waste Substances (Prohibition of Landfill) Decree, which prohibits wastes being landfilled when recycling or incineration is possible. The Decree lists 32 waste types to which an almost total ban on landfill applies.

The 1993 Waste Incinerators (Air Emissions) Decree regulates incinerators for domestic waste (and commercial waste of similar composition). It contains standards and regulations relating to atmospheric emissions, the combustion process, monitoring and record-keeping. Requirements as to the quality of secondary raw materials produced from waste are laid down in the Building Materials Decree, the Other Organic Fertilisers (Quality and Use) Decree and the Fuels (Organic Halogen Content) Decree. Requirements for landfill establishments are laid down in the Landfill Decree (Soil Protection Act).

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF WASTE POLICY AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Waste disposal is currently (i.e. in 2001) managed at the regional level. When the Waste Chapter of the Environmental Management Act is amended at the end of 2001 this will change: the inter-provincial barriers to the movement of waste will be removed, national waste management planning will be instituted and most of the regulatory powers hitherto in the hands of the provinces will be transferred to central government. The Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment will draw up a National Waste Management Plan and the first edition will be issued in 2002.

The fact that overall management of waste will be transferred to central government in no way detracts from the joint responsibility for waste of central government, the provinces and the local authorities. In 1989 these three parties concluded an agreement on cooperation and established the Waste Consultation Body (now known as the Waste Management Council). This agreement was updated in 2000.

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

Producer responsibility means that the producer is wholly or partially responsible for the management of his products in the waste phase, and for the costs of waste management. These costs are included in the price of the product, in line with the 'polluter pays' principle. Another consequence is that greater account is taken, in the design, production and use of the product, of the problems which may arise in the waste phase. Possibilities for recycling the materials or products are likely to be better exploited. Producer responsibility has been implemented on a voluntary basis for things such as end-of-life vehicles and plastic materials on building exteriors, and on a regulatory basis for car tyres, batteries and household appliances.

For other products, producer responsibility has been implemented by a mixture of regulations and voluntary measures, for example for plastic films used for agricultural and horticultural purposes, and for packaging.

When necessary, producers and importers can enter into an agreement on the introduction of a surcharge to help cover disposal costs. Section 15.36 of the Environmental Management Act allows for the Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment to declare such an agreement universally binding, so that producers and importers who do not wish to join in the agreement ('free riders') are also obliged to contribute towards waste management costs.

Producer responsibility has already been adopted at European level. Examples are the End-of-life Vehicles Directive and a directive, still in the draft stage, on electronic and electrical equipment.



IMPORT AND EXPORT OF WASTE

In order to ensure adequate, high-quality waste management in the Netherlands, and to close waste disposal loopholes, the import and export of waste need to be regulated. Costly, high-grade waste management options will not get off the ground if cheaper, less satisfactory methods are available in other countries. Policy on the import and export of waste depends on whether the waste stream is suitable for recovery (e.g. product recycling, material recycling, or use as a fuel) or must be disposed of (e.g. landfill, incineration). The European Regulation on the Supervision and Control of Shipments of Waste within, into and out of the EU generally permits the import and export of substances for recovery.

The import and export of waste for landfill is not permitted. The import and export of waste for incineration as a means of disposal is not permitted if this would put the application of the waste hierarchy (Lansink's Ladder) in jeopardy. In practice this means that the import and export of non-hazardous waste for incineration as a means of disposal is not permitted.

EUROPEAN WASTE POLICY

In recent years the focal point for policymaking on waste has moved from the national to the European level: waste management options are now largely determined in Brussels. However, the Netherlands influences European policy, and the European and Dutch approaches have some points in common, such as the priorities for waste prevention and management. The European requirements for waste processing (e.g. emission standards) in fact lag behind those applying in the Netherlands. But the gap will be reduced with the adoption of the Landfill and Incineration Directives. The same applies to the management of products in the waste phase, for example end-of-life vehicles and electrical and electronic goods.

GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

During the period 1990-1995 the government opted for a 'command and control' approach to waste management. There have been radical changes, however, in response to the shift in policymaking to the European level and the trend towards more market forces. Attempts are no longer made to regulate capacity or control the processing of waste products for recovery. Pending the entry into force in 2002 of the amendment to Chapter 10 of the Environmental Management Act, the only waste to which restrictions still apply for transport within the Netherlands is non-combustible, non-hazardous waste destined for landfill. For all other waste, inter-provincial barriers no longer apply. The same broadly applies to export to other countries: there are no restrictions on the import and export of waste for recovery. Waste destined for disposal is still regulated, however.

Government also uses financial instruments such as the landfill tax to implement policy. Making landfill more costly removes the incentive to dispose of waste in this way, since it is now generally more expensive than incineration or recycling.

RESULTS

The policy pursued in the 1980s and 1990s enjoyed some success. Between 1985 and 1998, the growth rate for waste was cut to a level below that of the economy as a whole: while GDP grew by 43%, waste grew by only 23%. The proportion of waste recycled increased, over the same period, from about 50% to over 75%. Emissions to the environment from the waste management system were also cut considerably by setting stringent standards for waste processing establishments.



Waste in the Netherlands, by type (ktonnes)	recycled	1985		1999	
		incinerated/ landfilled/ discharged	recycled	incinerated/ landfilled/ discharged	recycled
Households					
- normal collection	940	3830	2844	3829	
- bulky waste	50	565	876	780	
Transport					
- end-of-life vehicles	390	105	227	40	
- shipping	800	480	480	25	
- other	30	85	75	25	
Agriculture					
- agricultural waste	520	250	1550	55	
- other	165	30	210		
Industrie					
- phosphoric acid gypsum		2000		1210	
- jarosite		220		194	
- sewage sludge	735	365	516	171	
- field tare		1250	500	89	
- oilseed extraction residues	2400		3736		
- blast furnace slag	1200		1108		
- rock phosphate slag	600		533		
- other	6670	2390	8868	1804	
Trade/services/government					
- office, shop and service sector waste	415	2180	1550	1900	
- cleansing waste, etc. etc.	170	1030	765	350	
- other	65	75	66	194	
Building and demolition waste					
	6050	6180	15666	1476	
Energy supply					
	505	150	623	75	
Refineries					
	25	60	623	90	
Waste management					
- sewage sludge	1965	1580	213	1184	
Statistical error					
	-755	+775			
Total	22950	23600	42838	13733	
Source: Milieubalans 2000 RIVM					

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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**NB: This is one of a series of factsheets on waste
in the Netherlands. The most recent edition can
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