



# Livestock manure policy

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## Sustainable livestock farming: follow-up audit 2019

The Netherlands Court of Audit has audited the livestock farming sector's success at reducing manure pollution in the past five years. Animal manure contains phosphate and nitrogen, too much of which is bad for the environment and nature. The problem is a persistent one. Between 2015 and 2017 the Netherlands exceeded the manure pollution standards. The current audit is a follow up to audits carried out in 2008 and 2013.



### Rules are the cause of the problem rather than the solution

The audit found that the scenario underpinning government policy in recent years had been too optimistic. When the milk quota was abolished in 2015 and dairy farmers were allowed to produce as much milk as they wished, the government and the House of Representatives decided that growth was permitted provided the farmers spread out the manure on their own land or took it to a manure processing facility. They took it for granted that the farmers would comply with European standards. When the standards were not achieved, more and more laws and regulations were introduced. The rules were also constantly changed and extended. This did not increase the grip on manure pollution. Quite the opposite, the accumulation of rules has been the cause of the problem rather than the solution.



### What are our recommendations?

We recommend that both the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management “break the mould” of amending existing rules and introducing new ones.

Set clear standards and enforce them.

Simplify the rules.

Reduce the regulatory burden.

## Current status



The Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality acknowledges that the manure laws and regulations are complicated. She is therefore reconsidering the manure policy. The Court of Audit recommends that the policy allow for setbacks in practice. This would create a margin of safety and reduce the risk of non-compliance.

The audit was published and presented to the House of Representatives on 20 June 2019.

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## Attachments

### › Rules to prevent manure pollution are the cause of the problem rather than the solution

Changes in laws and regulations have not helped reduce manure pollution. On the contrary, the accumulation of rules seems to be ...

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## See also

- › [European Union](#)
- › [Environment, climate and energy](#)
- › [Agriculture and food safety](#)
- › [Spatial planning and nature](#)