

Topsectors

in the Netherlands



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WHAT IS THE DUTCH TOP SECTOR APPROACH?

The Netherlands is a global leader in trade and industry. We generate much of our income in the international arena, but our leading position is not a given.

We will have to do everything we can to remain competitive. For it is only then that we will be able to maintain sustainable economic growth. At the same time, we must take a firm approach to societal challenges such as an ageing population and climate change. These issues are at the very core of the top sector approach, where industry, science and government work together to tackle them. This unique form of collaboration (golden triangle/triple helix) is designed to promote innovation, to attract talent (human capital) and to ensure a solid position for the sectors in the international context.

Our approach is focussed on the nine sectors in which we are global leaders: our top sectors. The instruments we use include investments, fiscal incentives, guarantees and cutting down on bureaucracy and red tape.



High tech
Systems and
Materials



Horticulture &
Starting -
materials



Creative
Industry



Life sciences
& Health



Chemistry



Energy



Agri & Food



Water



Logistics

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL INTEREST?

In the Netherlands we generate much of our income through foreign trade and industry. In 2015, we were ranked 5th on the World Economic Forum's list of the world's most competitive economies, a fact of which we are immensely proud. Our fierce competitiveness is an important pillar of our prosperity.

We do everything we can to remain competitive. Our educational programmes are being set up to be better attuned to the demands of the job market so as to if we are to develop and retain talent. This requires the joint efforts of industry, science and government.

Through our top sectors, we are stepping up our efforts in areas that show major growth potential and in which we are already achieving solid results.

The Great Garuda in Jakarta, Indonesia, is a multifunctional sea wall in the shape of a mythological bird. Dutch businesses, government and research institutes from the Water top sector worked together with Indonesian partners on this project. The Master Plan offers solutions for urban and socio-economic challenges in the field of water and other areas, and the project protects Jakarta against flooding.



HOW DO THE TOP SECTORS WORK TOGETHER?

The success of the top sector approach is not only due to cooperation between industry, science and government in the various sectors. The cross-fertilization between the top sectors also produces clear added value. Just consider the Horticultural sector working together with the Energy sector to partially meet a city's energy needs, or the collaborative effort by the HTSM and Logistics sectors to enhance safety.

Why is this so important?

The big societal issues we want to address through the top sectors require an overarching, cross-border approach.

A close match between educational programmes and the job market, and structural cooperation between businesses and educational institutions are crucial factors that will help us to remain among the world's technology leaders. The business, education and government sectors have made concrete agreements in the Technology Pact. The top sectors aim to provide a total of 1,000 secondary vocational, higher professional, or university students with a top sector scholarship through the 2016/2017 academic year. They are also investing in centres: for advanced secondary vocational education: 17 Centres for Innovative Skills have been established, and 24 Centres of Expertise for higher professional education. More than 1,300 companies were involved in these initiatives in 2014. The Technology Pact will ensure a steady supply of appropriately skilled technicians well into the future.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SMEs IN THE TOP SECTORS?

The Netherlands is an SME economy, with SMEs creating six out of every ten jobs. Out of every 100 euros earned in the business sector, 60 are generated by SMEs. SMEs are the driving force behind innovation, exports, employment and economic growth, so it is important to make substantial investments in these businesses through the top sector approach.

It can be problematic for SMEs to obtain the right financing or to make contact with researchers, as their networks often do not include these kinds of contacts. The top sector approach will connect them with useful networks, which will also mean better access to research programmes and state-of-the-art research facilities. The approach also allows them to forge links with larger businesses at home and abroad with greater ease.

Most public instruments are focused on SMEs. This involves, among other things, government funding for SMEs through the SME Top Sectors Innovation Support Scheme (MIT) and the Dutch Good Growth Fund for SME projects in emerging markets and developing countries.

In 2015 the national government and the provinces will together make 50 million euros available for the SME Top Sectors Innovation Support Scheme, helping innovative businesses to operate beyond regional boundaries, to grow faster and to expand internationally.



WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE?

The government is committed to the top sectors in several ways: as a matchmaker bringing parties together, as a driver of innovation and as a facilitator working to cut through red tape. In addition, the government is reducing the regulatory burden and working towards a better alignment between the supply of qualified staff and the demand for these workers in the business and industrial sectors.

The government itself is also one of the parties and a co-investor. For each top sector, the government is striving for maximum returns from the means available: tax incentives, loan guarantee schemes and of course investments.

A large proportion of government loans and grants to top sectors go to SMEs and research institutes.

In 2014, 662 innovative SMEs availed themselves of MIT scheme facilities to implement innovations and to drive growth. They made use of knowledge vouchers, feasibility studies and research & development cooperation projects.

The government provides about 100 million euros through the TKI Top Consortia for Knowledge and Innovation Allowances to strengthen public-private partnerships in the area of knowledge and innovation in the top sectors.

The Horticulture and Starting Materials top sector encourages partnerships between large and small businesses and research institutes, and it champions the consumption of healthy foods.





WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS AND RESEARCHERS?

Businesses generate new jobs and economic growth, often by developing new products such as energy-efficient cars or medical equipment. Developing these products requires skilled staff and expertise. Researchers can help businesses in developing new products and improving their range of existing products.

Businesses can also assist researchers, for instance through marketing new knowledge that results from scientific research. Businesses are perfectly placed to identify economic opportunities and to know what kind of expertise is required.

Research institutes share their expertise with the Dutch business sector in many different ways. Businesses can approach many universities, for example, to have their ideas subjected to the rigours of scientific scrutiny. Together, businesses and researchers create more innovation, build a stronger economy and devise solutions for the challenges of tomorrow.



WHAT ARE OUR AMBITIONS?

We in the Netherlands aim to secure a position in the top-five of the world's most competitive economies. What does this mean for businesses and researchers in our country?

Businesses and researchers are increasingly working together on innovation, and will continue to cooperate to disseminate and market new developments. This is also our ambition for the long term, and we expect it to generate increasing returns. As a sustainable top sector partner, the government brings parties together and offers incentives when appropriate.

Businesses and educational institutions are continuing to invest in training – including career development – and are ensuring that education and training programmes are geared to the demands of the labour market. These efforts will help to mitigate shortages of qualified staff, giving businesses the opportunity to focus squarely on their competitive position.

The Netherlands will continue to provide an excellent environment for effective entrepreneurship, which requires reliable infrastructure and clear regulations. This will improve the quality of our business climate even further, encouraging even more international companies to establish operations here in the Netherlands.

The top sector approach contributes to the robust international position of Dutch sectors, which use their expertise and innovative solutions to address global challenges. We are of course very proud of our strong competitive position. All parties in the top sectors are ambassadors in their own right for the international achievements of the Netherlands.

