

MARKET ACCESS AND PHYTOSANITARY POLICY

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Market access as a crucial factor for the exporting sector

The Netherlands is a major player in the production and trade of seeds and young plants and is in the top three exporting countries worldwide. In 2022, the total Dutch export value of vegetative starter material was 4 billion euros. This does not include licence amounts. The Dutch share for seeds is approximately 17% of the entire world market.

This share is much higher for vegetable seeds: 38% of all vegetable seeds traded worldwide in 2017 were exported from the Netherlands. The Netherlands also plays a prominent role on the world stage when it comes to seed potatoes, flower seeds, grass and flax seed and ornamental young plants. The trade in seeds and young plants makes an important contribution to the Dutch and global economies. The Netherlands owes its strong export position to continuous product innovation, new varieties, high quality of seeds and plants and good logistics. To maintain and strengthen this leading position, it is essential for the sector to enter new markets and maintain existing markets.

SECTOR OPERATES INTERNATIONALLY

The Dutch seed and young plant sector has a very strong international character. Scaling up and internationalisation of companies in this sector is a trend that continues unabated. Re-export is the common business model for vegetable seeds and partly for starter material for ornamental plant cultivation. In addition to breeding and production in the Netherlands, the starter material is produced worldwide. Seed companies have breeding programmes in various countries to meet the specific requirements of the respective countries. Seed and cutting production takes place in specific third countries that offer the desired climatic conditions and have low disease pressure. Most seeds and cuttings then return to logistics hubs in the Netherlands where cleaning, quality control, possible treatment and packaging take place. The high-quality starter material is then exported to professional growers worldwide. In this way, the Netherlands plays a key role in the export and re-export of seeds and young plants.

MARKET ACCESS IS A CRUCIAL FACTOR

It is therefore very important for the sector that access to foreign markets, as well as imports and internal trade in the European Union, is not obstructed. Market access is often complicated by the phytosanitary regulations of importing countries. Importing countries want to protect themselves against possible entry of harmful organisms, as laid down in international treaties. They do this, among other things, by stipulating import requirements and carrying out checks. In addition to phytosanitary restrictions, variety registration, certification and additional import requirements can also hamper access to markets. Because each country has its own import requirements, it is a challenge for exporting companies to meet all these different requirements. This challenge is increasing due to the further internationalisation of companies, growing exports and the increasing complexity of phytosanitary requirements and other import requirements of third countries.

STRONG NATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION ORGANIZATION (NPPO)

Continued commitment to opening and preserving markets is crucial to the sector's continued success. Because phytosanitary market access is a matter between governments, laid down in IPPC, strong commitment from our government is required. In this case, this applies to the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), the Agricultural Councils and the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) in the role of NPPO and to technical-scientific support. Commitment also remains necessary to focus on the development and implementation of international standards, fact-based import requirements and options to meet the



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various import requirements. Contact between the Dutch government and a third country is also crucial for opening new markets, often preceded by a lengthy risk analysis by the importing country. It is important that the NVWA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality have sufficient capacity and substantive knowledge for these important tasks.

A RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The sector is responsible for the health of the starter material and, through its supplier role, has every interest in preventing the introduction and spread of harmful organisms. The companies use advanced quality control systems that guarantee knowledge and experience in the prevention and control of diseases, pests and hygienic measures. These measures together can be a good basis for phytosanitary guarantees, whereby the purchase of the plant protection product package is at odds with the zero tolerances of the importing countries.

Plantum is committed to the acceptance and use of company information that, provided it is under the official supervision of the NPPO, can serve as a guarantee for the issue of phytosanitary certificates. This could be an answer to the increasingly complex and detailed import requirements of third countries.

ACTIVE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In addition to the requested efforts of the Dutch government regarding market access, Plantum and the internationally organised companies actively work together with Euroseeds, ISF (International Seed Federation) and national associations worldwide to identify restrictive import requirements and a coordinated response to them.