



# **Research Tour – Farmers, populism & climate action: Lessons from post-election Netherlands for the EU’s future agriculture and climate policies**

A research tour for journalists

from 3 to 6 March 2024  
Amsterdam, Netherlands & Brussels




# Overview

Populist leaders and parties are on the rise in many European countries. In the Netherlands, the far right politician Geert Wilders could become the next prime minister, with the BBB (Farmer-Citizen Movement) as a potential coalition partner, which got strong support from farmers who felt threatened by measures of the previous government and the EU. Following the Paris agreement and other activities to fight global warming, agriculture is gaining more attention from policymakers worldwide. Yet, while steps to reduce emissions in other sectors are also often difficult to implement, changes to farming and food production are particularly emotionally charged as recent protests in Germany proved. To complicate matters, much of the support for agriculture is set through the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and accusing "Brussels" of hurting farmers' interests is a common trope in many member states.

While the coalition talks led by Wilders continue, politicians all over Europe try to find answers to populist challenges ahead of the EU elections in June. What follows from the fact that climate action is not a priority issue for most Dutch voters? What are the consequences of the EU's Nature Restoration Law? How does the EU react to the surge of fake news, which is expected to further increase during the election campaigns? Clean Energy Wire offers journalists based in Europe a chance to find answers to these and other questions during a study trip to the Netherlands and Brussels on 3-6 March 2024.

## Programme

### Sunday, March 3

Till 16.30  Arrival of the participants in Amsterdam, stay at Chassé Hotel, Chasséstraat 62, 1057 JJ Amsterdam

16.45 Tram and ferry to venue Tolhuistuin, IJpromenade 2

17.30  **Introduction into farmers' issues and the Dutch political climate**



- *Sarah de Lange*,  
Professor of Political Pluralism, University of Amsterdam

19.00  Dinner at Tolhuistuin

## Monday, March 4

9.30  **Session on Farming and Environmental issues**

**B**

- *Martha Bakker*,  
Professor at Wageningen University, Chairholder Land Use Planning Group


Location: Milieudefensie, Nieuwe Looiersstraat 31, 1017 VA Amsterdam

10.45  **Civil Society Actions and Environmental Issues in the Netherlands**

**C**

- *Bram van Liere*  
Campaigner at Milieudefensie and Spokesperson on traffic

Location: Milieudefensie, Nieuwe Looiersstraat 31, 1017 VA Amsterdam

12.15  break – grab Lunchboxes at a venue close to Milieudefensie’s office


12.45 leaving with the bus to the farm

15:00  **Meeting on the farm**

**D**


- *John Arink from Ekoboerderij Arink, website: <http://www.ekoboerderijarink.nl>*

Location: Ekoboerderij Arink, Gastevelsdijk 6, 7137 PD Lievelede

19:30  Dinner at Waterkant, Marnixstraat 246, 1016 TL Amsterdam

## Tuesday, March 5

8.00 **Breakfast at the hotel**

10.15  Taking the train from Amsterdam to Brussels Schuman.

12.08 Arrival in Brussels  
*Opportunity to go to the hotel and leave your luggage there.*

Location: Jardin Secret hotel, Rue du Berger 22, 1050 Ixelles.

13:45 Entering the European Parliament Accreditation Centre – Esplanade Solidarność  
*Please remember to bring your IDs/Passports.*

14:30  Lunch


Location: Zweig Visitors Centre, ground floor

15.15  **Reporting from Brussels with an eye on the national contexts**


**E**

- *Hans Nijenhuis*  
Journalist, former editor in chief at Algemeen Dagblad (Netherlands)

discussion moderated by Raffaella **de Marte**  
Head of the Media Services Unit

16:00  **The Path towards the European Elections 2024**  
Key events and information sources to follow ahead of the vote.

- *Alfonso Piromallo*  
Press Officer

16:15  **What happens in Brussels doesn't stay in Brussels**  
The impact of the EU's green legislation in the Member States


**F**

- *Mohammed Chahim*  
MEP, S&D, the Netherlands

discussion moderated by Raffaella **de Marte**  
Head of the Media Services Unit


17:00 **A toolkit to cover Parliament's work**  
Everything you need to know to always keep up to speed with the latest environment and climate-related news coming from the EP.

- *Thomas Haahr,*  
Press officer following the ENVI committee

17:45  **Reporting from the European Parliament**  
Tour of the media facilities and exchanges with audio-visual and press team..

- *Silvia Cagnazzo,*  
Audiovisual Unit

18:30 End

19:30  Dinner & Get-together at Kamilou, 36 rue Joseph II.

## Wednesday, March 6

- 08:30 Check out from hotel Jardin Secret
- 09.00  **What happens in Brussels doesn't stay in Brussels**  
The impact of the EU green legislation in the Member States
-  **Bas Eickhout**  
MEP, Greens/EFA, the Netherlands
- Location: Zweig Visitors Centre, ground floor
- 10.30  **How does the EU fight disinformation?**  
Presentation and workshop by the Spokesperson's service
- **Jacob Lolck**  
Spokesperson's Unit
- 11.15 walk from the EP to the European Climate Foundation
- 11.30  **Dutch representation and lobbying on EU decision making**
-  **Lise Witteman**  
Journalist and author, EU correspondent in Brussels
- Location: European Climate Foundation, room 'Sun', rue de la Science 23, 1040 Brussels
- 12.30  Lunch at the European Climate Foundation
- 13.30  **The EU's agri-food agenda in the run-up to the elections**
-  **Stefan Sipka**  
Senior Policy Analyst, EPC
- **Arianna Lombardi**  
Policy Analyst, Europe Jacques Delors
- Note: This session is organised in collaboration with the EPC's Connecting Europe Project.
- 15.15 **Wrap-up, feedback round and final remarks**
- 16.00  End of the programme

# From A to I:

## Background info on the programme

A

- **Prof. Sarah de Lange** is Professor of Political Pluralism at the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. In her research, she focuses on political parties and party systems. Currently, De Lange is working on the NWO-funded project “Generation differences and determinants of party choice”.

B

- **Prof. Dr. Martha Bakker** completed her PhD on land use change in relation to soil degradation at the Université Catholique de Louvain la Neuve. She now is professor at Wageningen University, and since 2019 chair holder of its Land Use Planning group.

① <https://wur.nl/land-use-planning-group/>

C

- **Bram van Liere** (MA Philosophy, MSc Biology) works as a climate solutions campaigner at Milieudefensie. He currently works on agriculture and the food market as well. Before joining Milieudefensie in 2016, Van Liere worked as a policy officer for the Party of the Animals in the Dutch Parliament. He also was a member of the provincial council of Noord-Holland for 8 years.
- **Milieudefensie** (Friends of the Earth Netherlands) has contributed to numerous improvements since its 50-year existence. Since 2016, the main focus has been on the climate crisis and Milieudefensie has become the most influential climate organisation in the Netherlands. In 2021 a groundbreaking climate court case against Shell was won. The judge ruled that Shell is a key contributor to major climate change, and ordered the company to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by net 45% by 2030 (compared to 2019). Striving for system change, Milieudefensie also demands from other large polluting companies to align their policies with the Paris Climate Agreement. In January 2024 Milieudefensie issued a new case against ING, as the first Dutch bank sued for its inadequate climate policy.

① <https://en.milieudefensie.nl/>

D

- **John Arink** from Ekoboerderij Arink.

① <http://www.ekoboerderijarink.nl>

- **Caring Farmers** represent the interests of a sustainable food system, with an eye on today's and the new generation. We take the farmer perspective as our starting point, because the farmer is the basis of this system and that is why we are Caring Farmers. We care for our food, so we care for our food makers. Our definition of a sustainable food system is not to use more raw materials for food than what nature can offer us. In this system people eat what is good for them and the relationship between food producer and all stakeholders around them is restored.

① <https://caringfarmers.nl/>

## E

- **Hans Nijenhuis** is a journalist and writer. He was editor-in-chief for the Dutch Algemeen Dagblad until 2021, and previously worked for the NRC Handelsblad newspaper. He continues working for the Algemeen Dagblad as their correspondent in Brussels.

## F

- **Mohammed Chahim** is a Dutch MEP for the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. He is the Vice-President of the S&D group in charge of the Green New Deal, and Member of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). He is also a substitute in the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). Previously he worked as a researcher in environmental economics and energy transition at the Dutch organization for applied scientific research (TNO).

## G

- **Bas Eickhout** is a Dutch MEP with the Greens/EFA, where he is vice chair of the committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). He is also a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON). He co-authored the IPCC report on climate change which received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. Before pursuing a career in politics he studied environmental sciences at Radboud University Nijmegen. He has been elected as a Lead Candidate for the European greens in the 2024 elections.

## H

- **Lise Witteman** is an investigative journalist and EU correspondent for Dutch media (Follow the Money EU) and has specialised in following EU decision making processes. She has authored a book on Dutch lobbyism in the EU, and is about to publish a book on the EU's democratic challenges.

① <https://www.ftm.eu/>

## I

- **Stefan Sipka** is a Senior Policy Analyst and Head of the Sustainable Prosperity for Europe programme working on environmental policies and smarter use of resources. His immediate focus revolves, in particular, around the circular economy, EU common agricultural policy, and interlinkages between these and other relevant policies at the EU and global level. Stefan's engagement in the EPC is built upon his previous background in environment, public policy, international relations and the EU. He worked for more than five years in the Belgrade think tank Centar za evropske politike (CEP), the EU Delegation to Serbia and the Hungarian National Waste Management Agency.
- **Arianna Lombari** joined EJD's team in November 2022 as a Junior Policy Analyst. Her research interests are greening of the agri-food ecosystem, food security and sustainable development. Arianna supports the work of Sophia Hub on the "GRAPE" (Greening agri-food policy in Europe) project. Prior to joining Europe Jacques Delors, Arianna worked as a trainee in DG GROW and as Research Associate at Edelman Global Advisory.
- **The European Policy Centre (EPC)** is an independent, not-for-profit think tank dedicated to fostering European integration through analysis and debate, supporting and challenging decision-makers at all levels to make informed decisions based on evidence and analysis, and

providing a platform for engaging partners, stakeholders and citizens in EU policy-making and in the debate about the future of Europe.

① <https://epc.eu/en/>

- **Europe Jacques Delors** is a Brussels-based think tank dedicated to research on sustainable development and European environmental policy. It was created after the Jacques Delors Institute in Paris (1996) and the Jacques Delors Centre Berlin (2014). United by a common theme – Penser l'Europe, Thinking Europe, Europa denken – the three think tanks aim to contribute to the debate on European integration.

① <https://www.europejacquesdelors.eu/>

- The **European Climate Foundation (ECF)** is a major philanthropic initiative working to help tackle the climate crisis by fostering the development of a net-zero emission society at the national, European, and global level. The ECF supports around 700 partner organisations to carry out activities that drive urgent and ambitious policy in support of the objectives of the Paris Agreement, contribute to the public debate on climate action, and help deliver a socially responsible transition to a net-zero economy and sustainable society.

① <https://europeanclimate.org/>

## Organisational details

### What languages will be spoken?

Presentations during the tour will be in English.

### What about travel arrangements?

Local transport *during the tour* will be organised by the Clean Energy Wire. Participants are kindly asked to organise their own travel to Amsterdam Central Station and back from Brussels.

The official programme will start on Sunday, March 3, at 16.30. The official programme will end on Wednesday around 16.00 p.m. at the European Climate Foundation in Brussels. Clean Energy Wire will reimburse the costs of an overnight stay (economy class) from Wednesday to Thursday if your travel options force you to stay overnight.

### Is there a possibility for individual research?



If you are interested in extending the study tour for individual research, please contact the Clean Energy Wire. We will support you in finding the most relevant experts, stakeholders, and locations for your questions.

### **What about quotes and interviews?**

We work on the basis that statements made by participants can be quoted by the journalists present in their media reports. As a rule, conversations are “on the record”.

If speakers do not want to be quoted, we ask them to inform the participating journalists where this is the case. Remarks may then be made “off the record” and will not be quoted.

In Germany, it is common practice for journalists to seek authorisation for quotes before using them. Speakers are asked to advise participating journalists if they would like to check quotes before publication.

### **What about photos, videos and audio recordings?**

We respect journalists’ fundamental right not to disclose the sources of their research. Some of the participants also come from countries where press freedom is under threat and where journalists are prosecuted. As a safeguard to participants’ rights and their well-being, we kindly ask you not to take any photos or to make any film or audio recordings on which participants can be individually identified.

If you would like to take photos or make audio or video recordings of our visit, please approach a staff member for Clean Energy Wire so that we can agree on safe and workable solutions. As Clean Energy Wire staff, we are happy to appear in any documentation of our visit.

For all photos of speakers or photos taken at locations and during on-site visits, please respect the specific requirements made.

**For all other questions on organisational issues please check the [FAQ section here](#) or get in touch with us at:**

event@cleanenergywire.org  
[www.cleanenergywire.org](http://www.cleanenergywire.org)

■ [#CLEWontour](#)

# About the **organisers**

## Clean Energy Wire

Germany's transformation of its energy system from fossil fuels and nuclear power to one based on renewables and efficiency is one of the country's defining stories. The move to a climate-friendly economy has far-reaching implications: The Energiewende changes not only markets and business models but reaches deep into society and well beyond Germany's borders. This creates many fascinating stories and requires strong journalism to keep track of the progress and inform the debates.

*What we do:* Clean Energy Wire CLEW produces and facilitates top-quality journalism about the energy transition in Germany and beyond. Our [CLEW Journalism Network](#) fosters cross-border cooperation among reporters covering the move towards a climate-friendly society.

*Why we do it:* A global energy transition is the key to getting the climate crisis under control. As a real-world laboratory, renewable energy pioneer Germany showcases what the shift to a climate-friendly future means for citizens, businesses and society as a whole. Good journalism is central to drawing the right conclusions from the experience of Europe's biggest economy, and to inform the public debate across the globe.

*Who pays for it:* As a non-profit organisation, Clean Energy Wire CLEW can offer its services free of charge thanks to its funders, [Stiftung Mercator](#) and the [European Climate Foundation](#).

[www.cleanenergywire.org](http://www.cleanenergywire.org)