

THE EPOCH TIMES



Dutch dairy farmer Martin Neppelenbroek at his farm in Lemelerveld, The Netherlands, on July 7, 2022. (The Epoch Times)

PREMIUM **EUROPE**

Dutch Dairy Farmer Faces Having to Cull 95 Percent of His Cows

‘I can’t run a farm on 5 percent’

By [Nathan Worcester](#)

July 13, 2022 Updated: July 15, 2022

A **A** Print

In the Netherlands, dairy farmer Martin Neppelenbroek is near the end of the line.

New environmental regulations will require him to slash his [livestock](#) numbers by 95 percent. He thinks he will have to sell his family farm.

“I can’t run a farm on 5 percent. For me, it’s over and done with,” he said in a July 7 interview with The Epoch Times.

“In view of the regulations, I can’t sell it to anybody. Nobody wants to buy it. [But] the government wants to buy it. And that’s why they [have] those regulations, I think.”



A cow at Martin Neppelenbroek’s farm in Lemelerveld, [The Netherlands](#), on July 7, 2022. (The Epoch Times)

Neppelenbroek made the remarks while speaking with Roman Balmakov, host of “Facts Matter” on EpochTV, during Balmakov’s [recent trip](#) to the Netherlands.

Neppelenbroek pointed out that not all farmers are required to get rid of so many of their cattle.

People living further from areas protected under Natura 2000, a European Union (EU) agreement for species and habitat preservation, can own more cattle.

That’s because the Dutch government’s regulations on [nitrogen](#) oxides and ammonia emissions are tied to sites’ proximity to those protected areas.

Dutch dairy farmer Martin Neppelenbroek at his farm in Lemelerveld, The Netherlands, on July 7, 2022. (The Epoch Times)

Farmers, truckers, and others across the Netherlands have led nationwide protests against that vision, partly spurred by a June 10 national and area-specific plan for curtailing nitrogen greenhouse gas emissions.

There's a sword of Damocles hanging over them: the possibility of compulsory seizure of property by the government.

NOS Nieuws reported that Christianne van der Wal, the country's minister of nature and nitrogen policy, has not ruled out expropriating land from uncooperative farmers.

According to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agriculture Service, the Dutch government has said its approach means "there is not a future for all [Dutch] farmers."

For now, Neppelenbroek's 70-acre-plus property is home to roughly 130 milking cows. It's been in his family for half a century.

"I'm the second generation," he said, adding that many farms in the Netherlands have been in families for much longer.

The Netherlands punches well above its weight in agriculture. The small, coastal country is one of the world's top 10 food exporters.

"When you have not a lot of space, you have to use it as effectively as possible," Neppelenbroek said.

"It's a delta, and the climate is not too hot, not too cold. It's an ideal place to grow."

Cows, Neppelenbroek acknowledged, produce lots of ammonia through their bodily waste.

Dutch dairy farmer Martin Neppelenbroek and Epoch Times host Roman Balmakov at Neppelenbroek's farm in Lemelerveld, The Netherlands, on July 7, 2022. (The Epoch Times)

Yet, “you can’t blame just one small group in your country for polluting the environment,” he said, adding that farmers feel they’re being overburdened.

Closing Dutch farms will just necessitate food imports from elsewhere, he argued.

He noted that cow manure can benefit soil health—certainly more so than the synthetic fertilizers that would need to replace it.

Cows can also be fed leftovers that people won’t eat: “They can get rid of a lot of stuff we can’t use as humans and put it into high-quality food,” he said.

Like many others in the Netherlands, he suspects the government wants to use the land that it takes to build housing.

Correction: This article has been updated to accurately reflect the number of acres of Neppelenbroek's farm.