

MARCH 2026

WORKING TOGETHER FOR NATURE

Findings & reflections from
Area-Based Collaboration

LIFE IP ALL4BIODIVERSITY LAYMAN'S REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

The nature in and around the Dutch Natura 2000 sites is under pressure. Developments in the surrounding areas, such as drying out, fragmentation and excess nitrogen, have a significant impact on these protected areas. The LIFE IP All4Biodiversity programme, which ran from 9 March 2020 to 8 March 2026, addressed these challenges. The programme focused on reducing pressure on Natura 2000 sites and strengthening habitats for plants and animals, both within nature reserves and, especially, in the transition zones beyond their boundaries.

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*Reducing pressure on
protected areas and
restoring the landscapes"*



ABOUT THE ALL4BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME

The LIFE IP All4Biodiversity programme (March 9 2020 – March 8 2026) brought together existing knowledge, gained new insights and turned these into practical tools for restoring nature. The programme had a total budget of € 16.271.076, in which the EU contributed 60% (€ 9.762.646). Collaboration was at the heart of the programme. In several areas, close cooperation took place with landowners and managers in and around Natura 2000 sites, as well as with governments and other stakeholders. Together, they explored which measures were most promising and put them into practice step by step. The lessons and experiences from these areas show what works and what could be improved, providing useful guidance for other areas in the Netherlands.

The programme was carried out by the following partners

BoerenNatuur, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN) , Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Society for the Preservation of Nature Monuments in the Netherlands, the provinces of North Brabant, Fryslân, Gelderland, Limburg and South Holland, Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management, State Forest Service, the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery and Bird Protection Netherlands.

AREA-BASED
COLLABORATION

REWARDING
BIODIVERSITY
ACHIEVEMENTS

Five success factors

The All4Biodiversity programme is based on the five success factors of the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery

DEVELOPING
AND SHARING
KNOWLEDGE

CLEAR AND
APPROPRIATE
REGULATIONS

SUPPORT AND
SHARED VALUES



ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

AREA-BASED COLLABORATION

The programme focused on strengthening nature in the Netherlands, with area-based collaboration as a key principle. This means that governments, farmers and nature organisations work together to make plans for a specific area and then put them into action. All4Biodiversity also invested heavily in sharing knowledge, focusing on what works well in area-based processes and what does not. Based on these insights, training sessions were provided and practical lessons were shared.

Practical Building Blocks for Strengthening Nature and Agriculture

Activities Implementation of two area pilots by the Province of South Holland in peat meadow areas around Natura 2000 areas.	Results • Concrete management measures implemented; ecological effects expected from 2028. • Creation of nature-friendly banks, measures for meadow bird management, strengthening ecological connections, and biodiversity preconditions. • Insights into soil improvement and development of species-rich grasslands.
Development of a Nature Building Blocks Handbook.	• A practical tool for farmers and land managers for biodiversity and climate adaptation.

Healthy Nature and Sustainable Agriculture on the Wadden Islands

Activities On Terschelling, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog, the Province of Fryslân, farmers, nature organisations and government authorities collaborated to strengthen biodiversity in dunes and polders.	Results • In the polders, pilots were carried out to improve water management, agricultural nature management and nature-inclusive farming. Farm plans were also drawn up, plots were developed and wildlife facilities were implemented. • On Ameland and Terschelling, biodiversity hotspots and sustainable land use were established, such as a bee park and new tree lines (hedgerows).
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Enhancing Collaboration in Area-Based Processes

In area-based processes, many parties work together, but this is not always easy. That is why the training Grip on Collaboration was developed. In this training, participants learn how to collaborate effectively: who to involve, which network to choose, what agreements are needed and how to make clear arrangements about roles and responsibilities. Participants also learn how to develop a shared language. Various parties, including BoerenNatuur and the Province of South Holland, have already completed the training.



Figure 1: Overview of the seven pilots of the programme. Each pilot identifies promising measures to increase natural values in and around Natura 2000 areas.

Lessons from Practical Experience

Within the programme, a guide for area-based collaboration has also been developed, providing clear explanations, practical tips, tools and real-life examples. It helps organisations to shape area-based collaboration in a concrete and effective way.

In addition, an inspirational document has been created, offering further guidance and ideas to strengthen this collaboration.

“*When knowledge meets practice, collaboration becomes transformation”*

Working together on sustainable water and soil management

Activities The Heuvelland Proposition is an area-based collaboration in South Limburg in which the Province of Limburg, the agricultural organisation and the water authority work together with 130 farmers on more sustainable water and soil management.	Results • Reduced nutrient runoff and improved water quality. • Management of runoff into nature areas through land swaps and the creation of ditches and hedges. • New insights into cultivation techniques that retain water and reduce erosion. • Availability of a no-till seeder to improve soil health.
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Area-Based Collaboration as a Driver for Nature-Inclusive Agriculture

Activities The Province of Gelderland collaborated with local partners on two projects: Veluwezoom-IJssel and Brummen. The goal was to combine nature restoration with agriculture, enabling farmers to maintain a future-proof income.	Results • In Veluwezoom-IJssel, a landscape analysis and discussions with local stakeholders led to a “Story of the Landscape,” including 12 nature-inclusive farm plans and joint agreements for the area. • In Brummen, 16 farm plans were developed, of which 15 farmers successfully applied for an extensification scheme. • A South IJssel Valley Area Cooperative was established, in which farmers collaborate on nature-inclusive agriculture and landscape management.
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REWARDING BIODIVERSITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Within All4Biodiversity, efforts have focused on developing new revenue models for more nature-inclusive agriculture. A key driver in this regard is making biodiversity performance measurable and rewarding it accordingly. The Biodiversity Monitor, developed by the Province of North Brabant, makes farmers’ sustainability performance transparent and serves as an important instrument for recognising and valuing these achievements. Many other provinces have since started working with such a monitor as well.

In addition, All4Biodiversity has invested in the development of short supply chains. Research shows that nature-inclusive agriculture can be financially viable, although high land prices remain a challenge. It is crucial that farmers are able to combine multiple forms of remuneration and that existing legal bottlenecks are resolved as a matter of urgency.



Figure 2: Illustration of the factsheet “Brabant Biodiversity Monitor”

Largest Sustainability Programme for Dairy Farmers Rolled Out in the Province of North Brabant

Activities

- Roll-out of the Brabant Biodiversity Monitor for Dairy Farming (BBM) with support from All4Biodiversity.
- Measuring biodiversity, soil and water quality on dairy farms and linking results to a performance-based reward system.
- Promoting agroforestry through advisory services, financial support and on-farm guidance.
- Organising study meetings and field excursions for farmers.

Results

- The BBM has grown into the largest sustainability programme for dairy farmers in the Netherlands.
- Participation of approximately 500 dairy farmers (around 30% of the total in North Brabant).
- Making sustainability performance on farms measurable and financially rewarded, with annual payments of up to €5,000 and additional benefits.
- Successful introduction of agroforestry among conventional farmers, resulting in six newly established food forests.

Short Supply Chains for Nature-Inclusive Food Production

Natuurmonumenten worked in the Rotterdam region on developing short supply chains to bring nature-inclusive products closer to the city. More than 30 farmers participated. New collaborations were established between farmers, urban hospitality businesses, retailers and municipalities. Activities ranged from food forests and community-supported farms (Herenboerderijen) to campaigns such as “Eat Naturally Local.”

Farmers still face obstacles, such as limited market opportunities and prices that are too low. The key lesson is that building demand, trust and collaboration takes time and requires long-term support.





DEVELOPING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Within the All4Biodiversity programme, strong emphasis has been placed on knowledge development and knowledge sharing as a foundation for effective biodiversity restoration and agri-environmental management. We have invested in deepening ecological and agricultural knowledge, supporting collaborative partnerships and developing practical tools that can be directly applied in practice. By making knowledge accessible, applicable and widely available, the effectiveness of measures has been increased and a stronger foundation has been laid for biodiversity restoration at various scales.

Knowledge as the Key to Successful Agri-Environmental Management

Activities

BoerenNatuur: the umbrella organisation of farmer collectives for agri-environmental management focused on three pillars:

- In-depth development of ecological and agricultural knowledge.
- Strengthening the organisational structure of collectives.
- Gaining better insight into how the agri-environmental scheme operates.

Results

- Knowledge files, fact sheets and short videos developed and shared, in collaboration with educational institutions.
- Broader participation and greater impact, as knowledge activities could be offered free of charge.
- The number of study groups expanded and were highly effective: practical, locally embedded and recognizable.
- All developed knowledge publicly available. Enabling provinces, water authorities and land managers to benefit as well.
- More effective deployment of agri-environmental management as an instrument in vulnerable nature areas.

Practical Tools: Biodiversity Toolbox

The Biodiversity Toolbox, launched in 2022 by the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery, has grown into a central hub for practical knowledge and inspiration. The toolbox contains tools, examples and background information for a wide range of target groups — from municipalities to farmers and citizens. In 2023, the content was expanded and the structure improved based on user feedback. In 2024, two new themes were added: Landscape Elements (green-blue infrastructure) and Basic Nature Quality. Both provide concrete guidance for strengthening biodiversity and improving the living environment.

Smart Mowing for Greater Biodiversity and Road Safety

Rijkswaterstaat, in collaboration with Wageningen University & Research, investigated how verges along motorways can be managed more intelligently. The goal: verges that are better prepared for climate change, safer for traffic, and provide more space for plants and animals.

Road verges cover approximately 2% of the Netherlands' land surface.

- They are highly important for nature: around half of all native plant and insect species occur in verges.
- Verges can also serve as green corridors connecting nature areas.

Between 2021 and 2024, different mowing regimes were tested at ten motorway locations. The results showed that mowing twice a year works best for nutrient-rich verges. In nutrient-poor verges, mowing once a year is sufficient. The timing of mowing is crucial: mowing before summer (late June or early July) and removing the cuttings reduces the risk of roadside fires and helps improve biodiversity. In addition, long-term contracts with contractors, including clear performance agreements, are important.



KANO Brings Parties Together Around a Shared Vision for Nature Development

Naturalis Biodiversity Center developed the Opportunity Analysis for Nature Development (KANO), a tool to identify opportunities for nature restoration together with local stakeholders. The instrument quickly maps out what is possible, what is needed and where knowledge gaps remain.

KANO was tested in four areas in Fryslân, Limburg and South Holland. The tool works well because it actively engages participants and helps them develop shared, feasible plans for biodiversity. It is therefore a particularly valuable tool at the start of an integrated area-based process, in which stakeholders themselves make choices and define measures.

CLEAR AND APPROPRIATE REGULATIONS

Within the LIFE IP All4Biodiversity programme, bottlenecks in legislation and regulations that hinder biodiversity enhancement in practice have been identified. At the same time, efforts have focused on concrete measures to strengthen biodiversity, such as the establishment of bee landscapes.

From Barriers to Solutions

Through the All4Biodiversity programme, barriers for nature-inclusive agriculture and nature development in legislation and regulations were mapped and solutions were explored together with provinces. In addition, research was conducted into how the Toolbox can contribute to the implementation of the European Nature Restoration Regulation, with directly applicable measures such as Basic Nature Quality and green-blue infrastructure.

Key conclusions from the research included:

- Current government policies regarding land, leasehold and procurement still leave too little room for sustainable choices.
- Policy rules often focus on maximising returns or ensuring legal equality, while ecological quality and long-term perspectives receive insufficient attention.
- At the same time, public authorities — through land ownership, lease contracts and regulations — have powerful instruments at their disposal to stimulate nature-inclusive agriculture. This requires targeted policy adjustments, strategic land use and clear frameworks.

“Clear, enabling legislation turns barriers into opportunities for biodiversity”

The LIFE IP report on barriers in legislation and regulations for nature-inclusive agriculture, commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN), shows that public authorities generally lease out their own agricultural land at commercial rates. Under current policy rules, there is limited scope to apply specific sustainability criteria. This puts pressure on farmers to intensify production in order to remain profitable.

The report suggests as a possible solution that public authorities include explicit sustainability requirements in the lease conditions for publicly owned land, for example regarding cropping intensity, the management of watercourses and the maintenance of landscape elements. Farmers who apply nature-inclusive practices could then be given priority in the allocation of such land.

Boost for the Creation of Bee Landscapes

Bees play a crucial role in both ecosystems and the economy. As essential pollinators, they are indispensable for food production, the conservation of biodiversity and the stability of natural habitats. Research shows that more than half of the bee species in the Netherlands are threatened with extinction or have already disappeared.

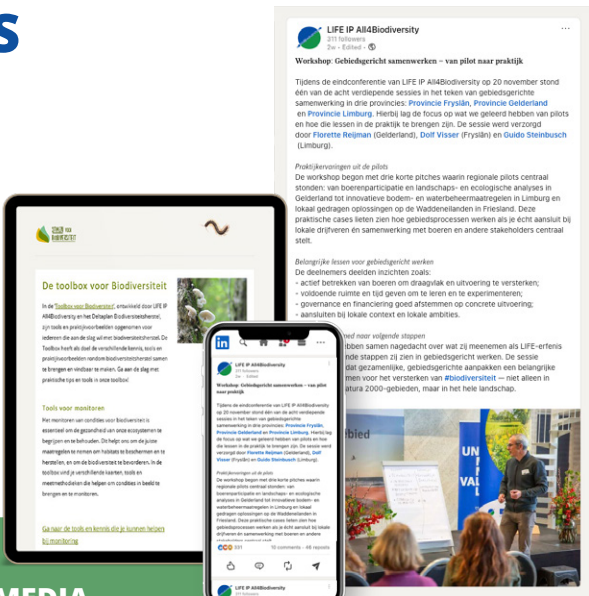
To help reverse this trend, the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery coordinated the development of bee landscapes. This was made possible in part by a contribution from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN) under the National Bee Strategy, supplemented with funding from the All4Biodiversity programme.



SUPPORT, SHARED VALUES AND COMMUNICATION

The LIFE IP All4Biodiversity programme invested strongly in communication to share knowledge and engage a wide audience. A national public campaign (“Maak grijs Groener”) raised awareness of biodiversity challenges and the need for action. Throughout the programme, numerous webinars and in-person meetings were organised to connect experts, practitioners and policymakers, encouraging the exchange of practical insights. Regular newsletters and a steady flow of social media posts kept stakeholders informed about progress, results and inspiring examples from the field. Together, these efforts ensured that the programme’s lessons, tools, and innovations reached a broad and diverse community.

SOCIAL MEDIA, NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER ONLINE COMMUNICATION



28.508 pageviews

TOOLBOX BIODIVERSITY
JAN-DEC 2025



INFORMATIVE WEBINARS



IN-PERSON MEETINGS & EVENTS



AWARENESS & ACTIVATION CAMPAIGNS



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Embed joint area-based processes in policy
- Make rewarding biodiversity the standard, not the exception
- Invest structurally in knowledge networks and farmer collectives

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The end of the programme is not the end of the work — it is the beginning of lasting biodiversity recovery

With the conclusion of LIFE IP All4Biodiversity, we close a successful period of collaboration, innovation and knowledge development in Dutch nature management. But this is not the end: the programme has laid a solid foundation for the next steps in biodiversity restoration. The knowledge gained, practical experiences and tools developed will be preserved and actively further developed within the partner network.

What comes next?

The Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery plays a key role in this process. As an involved partner, the Delta Plan ensures that insights, tools and methodologies from All4Biodiversity remain widely accessible through the Biodiversity Toolbox. This guarantees the practical applicability of these resources for land managers, government authorities, businesses and civil society organisations.

The Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery incorporates the three takeaways (left page) that were revealed during the past years. The toolbox is evolving into a dynamic platform wherein knowledge continues to flow and inspiration is shared. In this way, the impact of All4Biodiversity remains tangible even after the programme ends. It strengthens collaboration, encourages learning and adaptive management and contributes to robust, resilient nature. Together, we continue to build towards the restoration and enhancement of biodiversity — visible, practical and future-oriented!



More information on

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 [LIFE IP-all4biodiversity](#)

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