



Rabobank



Position Paper

Achieving SDG's together in Europe

Policy discussion points

Introduction

In this paper we highlight several of Rabobank's efforts and activities in the area of the SDGs¹ and we introduce three key points where we would like to see future EU policies to be especially focussed on. This is by no means meant as an exhaustive list and it serves as basis for discussion. We support the EU policies on SDG's at large.

Food security is a key topic

One of the key issues we would like to focus on here is food security. To provide some context, Rabobank currently lends EUR 98 billion to Food & Agri businesses, in 40 countries helping 4.9 million smallholders in Africa, Asia and Latin America together with project partners of the Rabobank Foundation. Helping to feed the world more sustainably is one of the most urgent priorities and we strive to make a difference here together with our clients. In October 2017 we launched as part of our efforts a Kickstart Food programme with four sub-themes: Earth, Waste, Nutrition and Stability. In a new partnership with UN Environment we aim to make a 1 billion US dollar facility available to help farmers switch to more sustainable and climate smart farming methods. Our goal is to contribute to increasing the food production by at least 60% in 2050 and to halve the climate footprint, feeding over 9 billion people in 2050.

¹ See for a more complete overview:

<https://www.rabobank.com/en/images/rabobanks-contribution-to-the-un-sustainable-development-goalsv2.pdf>

Europe can play an important role

Businesses need a level playing field and a set of norms that allows the market to function effectively. This also holds for implementation of SDG's, e.g. in respect to food security, access to finance and other priorities. Rabobank recognizes and supports the role of the European Commission, Parliament and EU member states to make legislation and policies consistent with the SDG's. Together we can help attain the Social Development Goals. In our view also the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the SDGs in the EU is a valuable forum to provide input to this process.²

Where are we now with the SDG's?

Fortunately, there is progress in the area of SDGs, as the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) states in a recent report for the Netherlands.³ We also believe that Europe is speeding up. On most of the 17 sustainability goals the Netherlands has committed itself to, progress has been made in the past year. The SDG indicators show a positive development for in terms of economy, low drop-out rates for young people, low number of teenage pregnancies, high percentage of recycling material. CBS sees also points of concern, especially in the areas of the environment, climate, energy and inequality. A major concern is the greenhouse gas intensity. This requires action. A Climate Agreement by business sectors, NGOs and government is

² See [here](#) and the Group's [input](#) to a EC reflection paper.

³ See: <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/10/netherlands-closer-to-achieving-sustainability-goals>

currently being negotiated and the financial sector, including our bank, is involved in this process. The Climate Agreement is due to be concluded in the coming months.

Another point of concern in the CBS report regards the position of women: the Netherlands has relatively few women in top positions in the business community, but relatively many women are in top positions in public administration.

How do we see our role as Rabobank and of other banks in regard to SDGs?

Rabobank can, and will, work with companies and citizens on concrete solutions to live up to the SDG's, such as:

- stimulate accelerating the sustainability of homes and offices with a discount on financing, by making the financial aspects of renovation easier and by – as far as we can in our capacity as lenders- assisting in making the use of renewable energy more attractive.
- reward the front runners in greening the economy e.g. in the agricultural sector. For example, we plan to incentivize farmers to better preserve biodiversity in dairy farming. We also investigate the possibilities to broaden this approach to - among other things - arable farming.
- stimulate more wind at sea and decentralized generation with solar cells and energy saving in homes and offices. We are active in both areas and will increasingly prioritise this in our services. For example, by annually supporting new local cooperatives and as market leader in the financing of offshore wind and onshore wind.
- invest more in diversity. Rabobank is a signatory of the Dutch Diversity charter together with the national government, branch organizations and SME organizations. This calls for changes at the top and encouragement of employees at the managerial level.

We would like to emphasize three points where the EC can especially help and stimulate industry:

- ensure clear standards, for example a green taxonomy, introduction of a green EU label, minimum environmental standards, social working conditions, and transparency on the application of ESGs, disclosure and governance.
- ensure synergy in policies of the various Directorate Generals. For example between Agri and FISMA, DG Environment.

- ensure exchange of best practices between countries.

Finally

Let us strive that not every country re-invents the wheel with regard to implementation of the SDG's. Europe can play a stimulating and coordinating role. At the same time let us ensure that new rules, which will undoubtedly come, are workable and proportionate. Overregulation should be prevented, as it takes away own initiative and will lead to high costs without the results getting better. We believe the best approach is to develop standards and minimum norms in regulation, and to give businesses and financial institutions some room to distinguish themselves on top of that in terms of sustainability and innovation. In doing so, businesses and consumers clearly have their own responsibilities towards the SDG's. Rabobank gladly takes up the challenge of implementing the SDG's and to work together with European institutions.

For more information please refer to:

Bouke de Vries, Advisor to the Board on Public Affairs, Rabobank, Tel +31 610969623, Bouke.de.Vries@rabobank.nl

Bas Ruter, Director Sustainability Rabobank, Tel +31 653357375, Bas.Ruter@rabobank.nl.

