

**Priority question for written answer P-000972/2023/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Compulsory buyout of farmers in the Netherlands advocated by Commission Vice-President Timmermans' Head of Cabinet

Dutch media recently reported¹²that the Head of Cabinet of Commission Vice-President Timmermans, Diederik Samsom, had been actively involved in a discussion with officials from the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality on the nitrogen issue. The Head of Cabinet was reportedly pushing for the compulsory buyout of livestock farmers – a proposal which is widely known to be very sensitive in Dutch society.

Reports stated inter alia that, according to the Head of Cabinet, the way to meet the Netherlands' nitrogen targets is to compulsorily buy out livestock farmers and the Commission would endorse the state aid needed to do that. Naturally, the Commission is in contact with the Dutch Government on this issue, but the impression is now emerging that the aim of liaising is to direct the process rather than to provide advice. In the light of the above:

1. Was Vice-President Timmermans' Head of Cabinet speaking on behalf of the Commission during the discussion?
2. What advice did the Head of Cabinet give during the interview and what was the rationale for this?
3. Is it customary for official discussions with Member States to be conducted by a head of cabinet?

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¹ <https://www.ftm.nl/artikelen/diederik-samsom-hamerde-op-gedwongen-uitkoop-veeboeren>

² <https://nos.nl/artikel/2468396-verplichte-uitkoop-boeren-is-uitweg-uit-crisis-kreeg-nederland-te-horen-in-brussel>