



Dutch Waste Management Association

Annual Review 2018

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about this publication

The Annual Review 2018 looks back on some of the important developments during the year.

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Professional sector confronts challenges



You will undoubtedly be aware that the Dutch waste industry has a lot on its plate at the moment. At the end of June the Dutch government surprised us by deciding to tax the import of foreign waste from 1 January 2020. The measure was prompted by the demands of the Urgenda ruling (the court case against the government forcing it to take more measures against climate change). Under the ruling the government must cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2020, compared with 1990 levels. We have investigated the implications of the import tax and found that it will not help at all. Instead of reducing carbon emissions, the measure will have a negative effect on the transition to a circular economy. The tax is financially, economically and environmentally disadvantageous. It will lead to a reduction in sustainable energy generation in the Netherlands and an increase in landfilling elsewhere. Also, lower volumes of residual waste in the Netherlands may reduce pressures to separate wastes and recyclers could find themselves in a less competitive position. The Dutch government should rethink its proposal.

Just before this import tax was announced, we had already been confronted with a carbon tax under the National Climate Agreement.

Although it seems logical for the government to want to stimulate industry to adapt production processes to reduce carbon emissions, it does not work that way for waste-to-energy plants. Operators have little or no scope to make their processes more efficient and have no influence on the household and commercial residual wastes they receive at the gate, which simply have to be processed. The DWMA has made this case repeatedly to the government. A carbon tax will not benefit the environment; it will put a brake on innovation and lead to higher costs for the public and industry. Recycling will also be made more expensive, because most of the wastes treated in waste-to-energy plants are residuals from recycling processes.

And to cap it all, this summer AEB Amsterdam had to shut down four of its six incineration lines for safety reasons, leaving us with the urgent problem of finding alternative destinations for the industrial waste and sewage sludge it used to process. Other operators came forward to fill the gap and some decided to limit imports from the UK for the time being.

The AEB problem has certainly not yet been resolved, but I am proud of how our members have rallied round and put their shoulders to the wheel. It shows once again the

importance of working together and of having a strong industry association. The Dutch waste industry can build on a professional sector that does not hesitate to take up its responsibilities. By reusing and recycling waste streams the sector makes an important contribution towards a sustainable society. By making greater use of residual heat and carbon capture for use by homes and industries we can further increase our contribution to combating climate change. And with our innovative waste infrastructure we can help other EU countries to meet their recycling targets. We must all keep our eyes fixed on the common objective of creating a European circular economy. The government must not frustrate these efforts with ill-considered measures.

Despite all the commotion, in this annual review we look back at the important developments in 2018 which are still high on the agenda. It is worth revisiting where we stand on these issues and showing what the DWMA stands for.

Boris van der Ham
President of the Dutch Waste
Management Association

Working **together** to **improve** the **quality** of **recycling** **streams**

In 2018 the quality of collected waste streams became a major concern. A growing number of parties demand that recycling be quality driven and the national government acknowledges that this is an important objective. For years the DWMA has argued for putting quality before quantity. Parties are working together to improve the situation.

In the vision of the DWMA, the key condition for establishing a circular economy is eco-design; designing for future reuse and recycling will make products circular. In a circular economy, prevention, reuse and recycling will remain crucial, and it is essential that recycling streams are of good quality so the materials can be used to make new high-grade products.

Improving quality

Various studies show that the quality of collected waste streams is declining. From the results of research into the quality of food and garden waste, paper, glass and

textiles collected from households in 2018, Rijkswaterstaat (the government agency for public works and water management) concludes that most of the problems are to do with food and garden waste. Green waste processors concur and report an increase in contamination. Contaminated food and garden waste leads to loss of this material during the treatment process and to contaminated compost, and pushes up costs. The DWMA analysed the scale of the problem and found that the contamination of separately collected food and garden waste has doubled over the last ten years. A similar increase in con-

tamination levels is also found in plastics, glass and textiles streams. Maintaining the quality of the collected materials is crucial for facilitating circular material flows and making high quality products. In 2018 several parties launched joint initiatives to improve the quality of collected materials. The DWMA is involved in projects for food and garden waste and PMD.

Circular procurement

An important driver of the circular economy is the procurement of





High quality recycling
delivers **materials** for
the manufacture of
high quality products

recycled raw materials by manufacturers and governments. Matching the supply of these materials to demand will reduce the use of primary raw materials. Besides making sure that procured products are recyclable, it is also important to choose products which contain recycled material. The mandatory use of 30% recycled material in the manufacture of new plastic bottles, enshrined in EU law at the end of 2018, is a big step in the right direction. A programme to stimulate the

use of recycled plastic packaging waste in the manufacture of new products (*Programma Kunststof verpakkingafval als grondstof*) was launched in 2018 and the DWMA is represented in the programme's sounding board group.

The Association is convinced that similar initiatives are needed for other waste streams. Price is also a key aspect and government policy must be directed at making recycled materials cheaper to use than primary raw materials.

See also:

- [Mandatory recycled content in beverage bottles](#)



Sector wants **recognition** for **carbon reductions** **beyond the gate**

The first outlines of the new National Climate Agreement came to light in 2018 and the DWMA took part in the discussions on measures to halve Dutch greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The main contribution the waste sector can make is to reduce the carbon emissions of other parties. It is important that this contribution is recognised.

The DWMA participated in the '25% working group', which was part of the Industry sector panel. The industry organisations that sat in the working group represent companies that together account for 25% of industrial CO₂ emissions in the Netherlands. Cutting these emissions is such a major challenge that industries also have to look at possibilities beyond their own activities. Life-cycle thinking is required and cooperative measures can bring about considerable emission reductions.

Emission reductions outside the gate

The government's coalition agreement includes a reduction target for the waste-to-energy plants of 2 megatonnes CO₂ by 2030. The plants have few or no possibilities of reducing emissions from their own processes because emission levels are largely determined by the wastes entering the process, but there are promising opportunities to reduce emissions beyond the gate. One way is to supply sustainable heat to industry or homes, which can then make considerable reductions in their own carbon emissions because they will then make little or no use of fossil fuels. Another way is to capture CO₂ released from incineration and supply it to industries that need it. The waste sector already has firm agreements with greenhouse horticulture businesses. However, such cooperative arrangements throw up a dilemma for the allocation of emissions. If the waste sector captures CO₂ and stores it underground, the reduction is allocated to the waste sector, but if the CO₂ is reused, the receiving party can credit itself with the reduction. The waste sector wants recognition one way or another for its contribution towards



Carbon **captured**
by the sector can
be **used to enhance**
crop growth in
greenhouses

this reduction in carbon emissions. In the vision of the DWMA, reusing CO₂ is more sustainable than storage. It contributes to energy saving, recycling and the circular economy.

Subsidy for research into reusing CO₂

In summer 2018 the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy provided grant aid to support further research into possibilities for carbon capture and reuse in greenhouse horticulture. The studies detail the economic, technical and social aspects and indicate how much financial support is needed to finalise plans. An investment of several million euros will be needed to complete these studies and the grants make a substantial contribution to meeting that.



See also:

- [Dutch waste sector and greenhouse growers present CO₂ reuse project at CEWEP Congress](#)
- [Sustainable route for CO₂: capture and reuse](#)



Sector **well** **prepared** for **Brexit**

Brexit remains a hot item and has implications for the waste sector. The free trade in waste for recycling and materials recovery between the United Kingdom and other European countries must remain possible after the United Kingdom has left the EU. The DWMA argues the case for this together with our British colleagues. However, it is not clear what the exact consequences of a no-deal Brexit would be on the market.

A single European waste market

In 2007 the EU's internal borders were opened to the passage of waste destined for incineration with energy recovery. The Dutch government backs this decision and is in favour of continuing this policy. The European market for waste is helping to bring about a European circular economy because it means optimal use can be made of existing capacity for high quality recycling and waste treatment. Members of the DWMA are in a position to help other countries treat their waste for recycling and materials recovery until they have sufficient capacity themselves. This is good for

the environment because waste does not then have to be land-filled in those countries, avoiding landfill gas emissions, while reducing the use of fossil fuels in the Netherlands. It also delivers economic benefits to the European market: exporting countries can invest in recycling and Dutch operators can use the returns to invest in innovations for the transition to the circular economy. Barriers to cross-border transport should be removed as much as possible. Efforts to this end are being made within the Green Deal North Sea Resources Roundabout and are yielding results.



WSR notifications to remain in force

The DWMA monitored the administrative burden on its members and held discussions with the Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate about Brexit. By the end of 2018 it became clear that as far as the European Commission



**The free trade in waste
for recycling and
materials recovery
must remain possible
after Brexit**

and the British authorities are concerned, existing Waste Shipment Regulation notifications will remain in force after Brexit. Exporters and importers of wastes from and to the United Kingdom will not have to submit new notifications for consent.

See also:

- [Industry group calls on UK and EU to take action on waste export](#)
- [North Sea Resources Roundabout is paying off](#)
- [Frictionless trade in recyclable waste vital post-Brexit](#)
- [Westminster awakens](#)



Bioplastics: **do recycle,** **don't compost**

The DWMA supports the use of sustainable packaging material. *Biodegradable* plastics, however, present problems for both composting and recycling. To prevent further expansion of the market for *biodegradable* plastics, without any benefit for the transition to a sustainable society, the DWMA took a clear stand in 2018: a decision must be made for mechanical recycling of *biobased* plastics.

Clear message prevents contamination

Based on research and practice, the DWMA concludes that *biodegradable* plastics should not be put in with food and garden waste or in the plastics/PMD bin. *Biobased* plastics, on the other hand, can be put in the plastics/PMD bin as they cause no problems in the plastic recycling process. The message to the public is therefore clear: bioplastics belong in the plastics/PMD bin. Clarity prevents contamination of separated waste streams, so that they can be used to make clean raw materials and products – materials that are in demand on the market.

Exceptions: food waste bin liners and separately collected monostreams

In some cases the sector makes an exception, such as food waste bin liners made from biodegradable material. These bags improve the ease and efficiency of food waste collection and so help to increase the total volume of separately collected food and garden waste. Composters accept these bags in the food and garden waste because they are so popular and practical. Another specific application are the monostreams (a single specific waste category) which can be collected separately and processed in a particular way, such as production waste from factories and beakers collected separately during festivals.



The future

The DWMA is involved with the Action Plan on Biobased Plastics, launched in 2018. The Association is working with policymakers, research institutes and manufacturers to investigate which uses of recycled bioplastics are best suited to a circular economy, how to stimulate plastics recycling, and how this can be communicated clearly to the public.

See also:

- [Plastics: biobased or biodegradable?](#)
- [Bioplastics fact sheet](#)



Biodegradable food waste bin liners **improve** the **efficiency of food waste collection** and so are **permitted in food and garden waste**

More **energy** from **waste** possible

Heat from waste
can be **used** to
warm homes,
greenhouses and
business premises

The waste sector produces almost a fifth of all the renewable energy in the Netherlands and wants to play a major role in the energy transition. The potential is great.

Renewable energy currently makes up about 7.4% of national energy use.

Achieving 14% in 2020 therefore means almost doubling renewable energy generation. The target for 2023 is 16% and in 2050 the government wants energy supply to be almost entirely renewable.

Huge potential for heat recovery

In 2018 the DWMA investigated the possibilities within the sector for achieving the targets set in the National Climate Agreement. More energy can be recovered from the same amount of waste, particularly by making greater use of the huge potential within the sector for recovering and delivering heat. The amount of heat produced by waste-to-energy plants, biomass power plants and anaerobic digesters can grow to no less than 32 petajoules by 2023 (20 petajoules renewable). This is equivalent to the average natural gas consumption of almost 700,000 households. This heat can be used, for example, to heat houses, greenhouses and businesses. The amount of green gas produced can also double to 2 petajoules. The sector would then make a significant contribution to making the Dutch energy economy more sustainable, and contribute to the government's

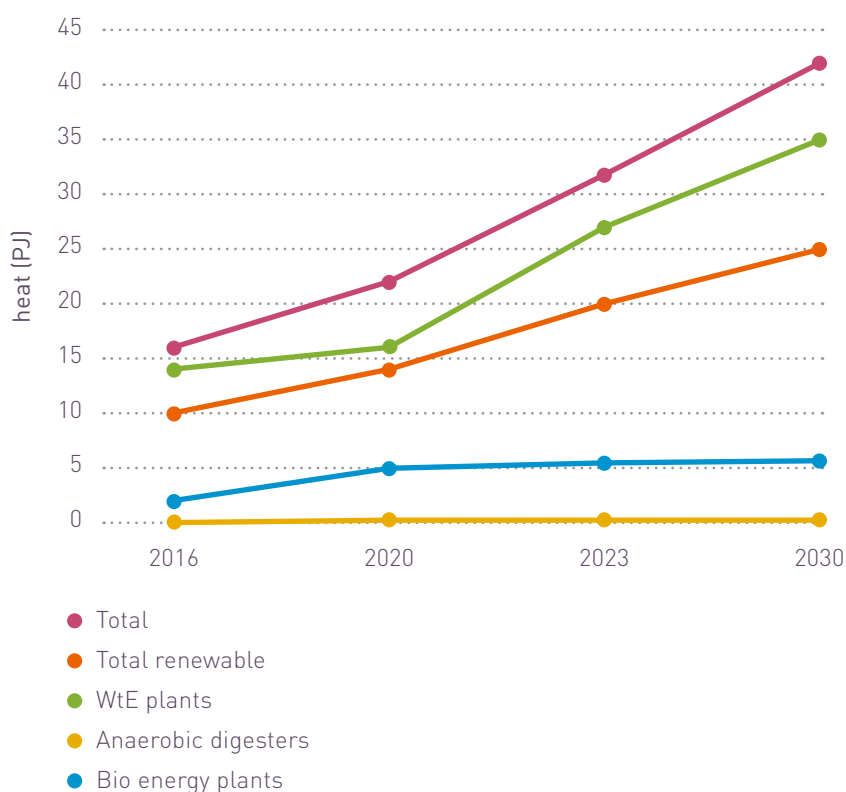
plan to phase out the extraction of gas from the Groningen field.

Challenges

To exploit this potential, the sector needs the right incentives, in particular a subsidy scheme that is flexible enough to accommodate different types of heat delivery projects. Besides the need for finance, implementing heat projects involves several other challenges

as well, including the infrastructure requirements, the necessary permits and finding suitable buyers of heat in the surrounding area. The investments that need to be made mean that an adequate and consistent policy is required. The government needs to take the lead in rolling out the infrastructure required for the distribution of heat.

Heat potential of the waste sector



Tackling **fire risks** at **waste site**

Safety is the prime concern of the DWMA and its members. Efforts by the waste sector to reduce fire risk at waste sites continued unabated in 2018. Fire prevention requires input from all the parties in the waste chain. The DWMA is working with partners to prevent mattresses and batteries from entering the residual waste stream. The DWMA took part in the industry's first Safety Week.

Waste companies are taking a range of measures to prevent fires. They learn from each other, improve their stock management, ask discarders to look out for materials that do not belong among the waste, and share proactive fire safety measures.

Agreements on fire prevention

In November 2018 the DWMA held a meeting for its members and cooperation partners. Representatives from various organisations, including the regional environment agencies and the Dutch Association of Insurers, suggested potential solutions. The

meeting emphasised once again that fire prevention requires a joint approach. Every party in the chain realises the urgent need to make serious work of fire prevention. An important aspect of this is awareness-raising. For fire safety in the workplace to have the best chance of success, employers and employees must recognise that the agreements made are binding.

DWMA takes part in Safety Week

The number of occupational accidents in the waste sector is relatively high. Safety should therefore always be on the agenda. The DWMA undertakes various activities to focus attention on

improving working conditions and safety among its members. In 2018 it participated in the first Safety Week, organised by the foundation that administers the Health and Safety Catalogue. During the event,





**Constant
attention** to safety
is **essential**

held in the first week of June, members organised special activities throughout the country, such as public information sessions, compliance actions, internal communication campaigns, correcting

bad practices and explaining the consequences of incorrect behaviour, and speed controls. During the week the DWMA published the findings of ten years of accident questionnaires, which show that

the number of accidents is falling. The Association also published an article, 'Safety is our top priority', about the Safety Week and the importance of safety and healthy working in the industry.

