

# **Development of land consolidation in The Netherlands from project objective to project instrument**

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## **Abstract**

In the Netherlands, land consolidation was carried out throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first Acts on the matter were issued in 1924 and 1938. However, only after World War II, substantial land consolidation really started in the framework of integrated land development projects. In these projects, land consolidation was carried out, integrated with infra-structural and landscape improvements, while the main purpose was to improve the agricultural structure, in order to increase productivity and lower the production cost. The legal basis for the post-war consolidation activities was provided by the land consolidation Act of 1954. From 1945 up to the year 2000, some 650 land development projects were implemented, covering about 2.5 million ha, involving a State investment of an estimated 5 billion Euro.

After more than achieving the agricultural production targets in the seventies of the last century, perceptions about the use of the rural areas started to change. Apart from providing the necessary space for agricultural production, these areas were increasingly seen as attractive open space for nature development, ecological zones and recreation purposes for both city and rural area residents.

The instrument of land development for agricultural restructuring, transformed into a multi-purpose instrument to solve the occurring conflicts between land use claims for various purposes. The latter developments required a new Act, which was finally validated in 1985.

As a result, land consolidation has, since the 1980ties, quite rarely been used for solely agricultural reasons. The more frequent use of this land exchange tool focuses in the present time on rearranging the local areas to provide an attractive sustainable rural environment, in which it is pleasant to work, live and recreate for residents and visitors from the cities alike.

Institutionally land consolidation is facilitated by three executive public organisations, the Service for land and water management (DLG), the Cadastre and the Bureau for land procurement and management (BBL), which was in 1995 merged with DLG. However the decisive factor for the success of land development projects has always been the committee of local stakeholders, in which next to the main interested private parties also water boards and municipalities are represented. As regards the administrative decision authority and responsibility for land development projects, the centre of gravity has shifted over the years from relevant central ministries to the provincial governments.