



BIOTECHNOLOGY KEY TECHNOLOGY FOR THE NETHERLANDS

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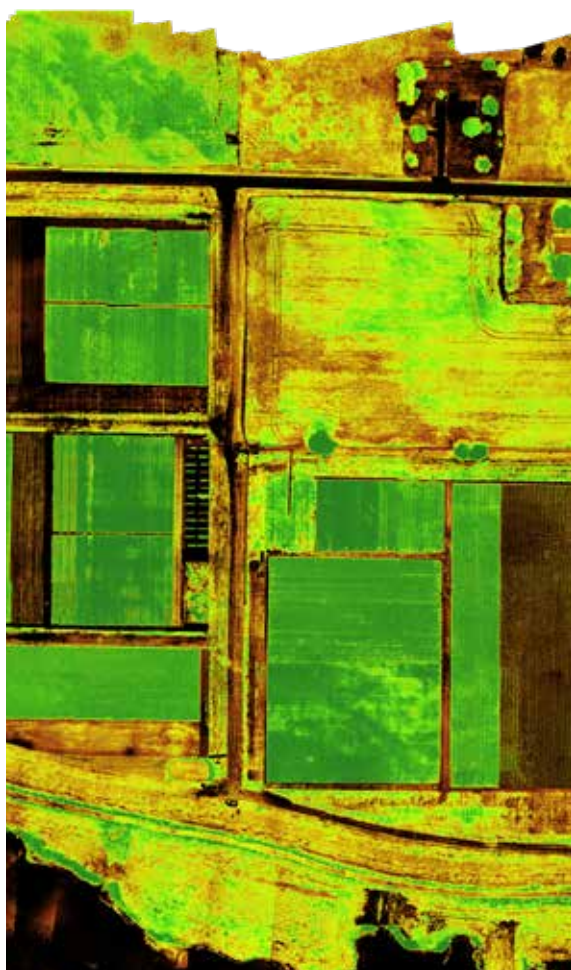
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On 1 March 2021, the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (known as VNO-NCW), the largest employers' organisation in the Netherlands, presented to the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate its vision document *Biotechnology in the Netherlands 2025 (Toekomstpact Biotechnologie Nederland 2025)*.

The vision document was prepared by VNO-NCW and leading companies in the industry with as ambition: the Netherlands, the Boston of Europe!

The vision document identifies biotechnology, together with artificial intelligence, as the engine for the fourth industrial revolution. Biotechnology is of essential value not only for food, but also for sustainability and health, and as such for the quality of our society.

The Netherlands already houses global players in biotechnology, e.g. with Aventium and DSM developing innovative chemistry technologies, Rijk Zwaan and Enza Zaden developing new plant varieties, and Janssen developing vaccines, e.g. against corona.



Consultancy firm McKinsey has calculated that an optimal use of the opportunities biotechnology offers may contribute an extra EUR 30 billion to the Dutch economy.

To realize this ambition and maximize the contribution to the economy, the vision document proposes four different actions, for which a joint effort of all stakeholders - government, universities and business - is required:

1. More investment in biotechnological research and a better use of knowledge

Although the Netherlands has excellent biotechnological knowledge, the effective use thereof can be improved. For this purpose it is necessary to establish a Dutch Institute for Biotechnology, for coordinating and accelerating research and the use of biotechnology. Also, ambitious investment in biotechnological research is recommended, e.g. at Wageningen University & Research, known worldwide as the agricultural equivalent of Harvard University.

2. Biotechnology as a spearhead for investments

A key technology as biotechnology has specific needs, such as a strong digital infrastructure, cooperation with artificial intelligence, and the availability and education of proper staff. Also, the existing biotechnology hubs in food, chemistry and health should be better connected to each other, creating the international proposition of the Netherlands as one biotech-hub, with close cooperation of the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA), key industry players, the government and local organisations.

3. Tailor-made financing for biotech start-ups and scale-ups

The vision document identifies that biotechnology often requires large investments, for which companies sometimes need to link-up with foreign investors, due to a lack of local investors. This lack of local investors is considered undesirable, and tailor made



solutions are required to solve this. For this purpose public stimulation funds may be required and institutional investors could have a role in developing new, better accessible finance instruments

4. Progressive policies, laws and implementation thereof

Developments and innovations in biotechnology often outpace the regulatory process. This may result in outdated policies and laws effectively putting a brake on new developments or their use. Therefore, the vision document proposes that the existing regulatory framework should be thoroughly scrutinized and plans should be developed for properly modernizing the laws and regulations applicable to new uses of biotechnology, e.g. for patients and consumers. The appointment of a biotech ambassador is recommended, to supervise and synchronize the communication between the different ministries and other government agencies involved and improve the communication with universities and the biotech industry. The government should in

consultation with the industry identify relevant biotech developments and promote new uses, like e.g. cultured meat.

In summary, with already a strong presence in the different sectors of the biotechnological industry, the Netherlands are set for further developing this into one of the, if not *the* biotech-hub of the world. This will create all kind of opportunities for investors, researchers and other stakeholders in the biotech industry. The agriculture team of BUREN will with pleasure assist you in exploring these opportunities.

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