



Country Check (2): **Netherlands**

Nederland Paardenland - a thriving horse country



Jeroen Dubbeldam

Nederland Paardenland - the Netherlands, a horse country! The number of horses per inhabitant is one of the highest in Europe; higher than in horse nations such as Germany, England or Spain - the same is true for the number of riders, who are among the most successful and active competition riders anywhere. The Dutch Warmblood is one of the world's most popular breeds. According to some sources, the Netherlands are even the horse export country number one in the world. In part 2 of our "Country Check" series we are drawing a portrait of the Netherlands and their equestrian trade sector.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS - HUGE EXPORTS

Both with regard to exports and imports, Germany is the most important trading partner of the sixth largest EU economy. In 2014, the Netherlands exported goods worth 433.4 billion US dollars and imported goods worth 382.4 billion US dollars. 1.8 per cent of the gross domestic product of 662.8 billion euros were generated by the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sector in 2014.

The Netherlands with their technologised and productive agricultural sector are the world's third largest exporter of agricultural products after the USA and France, and this despite the fact that only two per cent of the employees work in the sector. Apart from the famous cucumbers, tomatoes and tulips, there is also large-scale dairy farming, among other things. Cheese is an important export product.

EQUESTRIANISM IN THE TOP TEN

The Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie (KNHS), which was founded in 1924, is the umbrella association for all riders, carriage drivers, vaulters etc. and, with 192,000 members, one of the largest sport organisations in the country. In 2006, the KNHS still had 188,000 members before numbers declined again after a peak in 2010 with



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Italy (RB issue no. 10/16)

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212,000 members. The biggest sports federation is the national football association - the Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbal Bond (KNVB) with 1.2 million members. "Horse-riding is definitely among the top ten in Dutch sports," says the Dutch managing director of euro-star (Mönchengladbach), Monique van Dooren.

An interesting comparison: the number of people interested in horses is supposed to be just as high as the number of KNVB members - 1.2 million. 70 per cent of all riders practise their sport for pleasure only. 250,000 of the total amount of



Our long coast offers fantastic opportunities for hacking on the beach," the Dutch Equestrian Federation writes enthusiastically. Maybe that is the reason why the Netherlands have another "record" up their sleeve. "The Netherlands are not only a traditional horse-breeding country. The percentage of riders we have in comparison to the number of inhabitants is perhaps the highest in the world," says Geert Postema, Managing Director of Divoza Horsecworld. Approximately four per cent of the Dutch are riders.

SEA TURNED INTO LAND

About half of the land area of the largest Benelux state is less than one meter above sea level, around one quarter is even below sea level. Dikes with a total length of 3000 kilometres protect the flat areas against storm tides. The highest point of the Dutch mainland is the Vaalserberg mountain with 322.5 metres that is located in the border triangle with Germany and Belgium.

Amsterdam has a population of approximately 830,000 out of a total of almost 17 million inhabitants. Apart from the capital, the port city of Rotterdam (630,000), The Hague (519,000), Utrecht (339,000) and Eindhoven (225,000) are counted among the largest cities. The (European) part of the country is divided into 12 provinces, and the most recent one - Flevoland Province - was founded no sooner than 1986. It was largely reclaimed from the IJsselmeer.



“Horse-riding is among the top ten. But girls football and hockey have recently increased in popularity at the cost of equestrianism.”



Monique van Dooren, Dutch managing director euro-star

450,000 horses in the Netherlands are privately owned - with a rising tendency in the past few years despite the economic downturn. With 80 per cent, the total majority of the 500,000 Dutch riders is female. “Girls football and hockey have recently increased in popularity at the cost of equestrianism, though,” Monique van Dooren explains.

THE LEADING COMPETITION RIDERS IN EUROPE

50,000 of the KNHS members are competition riders. 135,000 of all members have their own horses. With about 25 horses per 1000 people, the Netherlands have one of the highest horse densities in Europe. A total of 765,000 show participations in eight disciplines amount to the highest number of show participations per rider in Europe, according to the association. More than 3000 riding centres and riding clubs organise a total of 7300 events per year. The majority of riding schools is affiliated to the Federatie Nederlandse Ruitersportcentra (FNRS).

The largest numbers of competition riders are located in Gelderland (4327) in the eastern central part and in Noord-Brabant (4044) in the south of the country. Dutch riders have won a total of 23 medals at Olympic Games so far. At the 2012 Games in London they gained six medals - 20 per cent of all Dutch medals. At the past European and world championships, the Oranje riders made it to the podium 26 times. insgesamt 26-mal auf dem Treppchen.

The model dressage rider

Dressage star Anky van Grunsven is still the model-rider of the Netherlands. The 48-year-old triple Olympic champion, birth name Theodora Elisabeth Gerarda van Grunsven, has had a string of successes during her career in the dressage arena and been elected “Rider of the Year” seven times. Van Grunsven, who is married to Steef Janssen and has two children, distributes her own collection of equestrian clothing under the brand name of ANKY.



TALENTED HORSES WERE KEPT IN THE COUNTRY

“Almost everybody here knows the names of Anky van Grunsven and her successful horse Bonfire,” Monique van Dooren says. Dressage still rates a bit higher than show jumping in the country. “In the recent past, the Dutch paid a lot of attention to breeding and supported the sport from junior level,” Henrik Berkel, head of sales for Germany at Imperial Riding, one of the oldest Dutch wholesalers for equestrian sports equipment, says. “They managed to keep most of the talented horses in the country.”

This is the task of the Nederlands Olympiade Paard (NOP) and the Springpaarden Fonds Nederland (SFN). The NOP currently has 17 potential team horses under contract for the team to be



able to compete at the Olympic Games in Rio with the best possible pairings. At the last world championships, the victorious Dutch show jumping team used four horses from their own country.

SEVEN HORSES - ONE JOB!

At the same time, the Netherlands are the largest horse exporting country in the world, the Dutch sports association announces. All of the four British dressage team riders winning the world championships last time were mounted with Dutch horses. Horses of the Koninklijk Nederlands Warmbloed Paard (KWPN) bre-

ed, the Dutch Warmblood, rank among the best sport horses in the world and therefore also among the most requested ones. 10,000 KWPN foals are born every year. In 2013, horses worth 200 million euros were sold abroad.

The Dutch equestrian sector and the associated companies employ a total of ten thousands of people and generate an estimated total turnover of 1.5 billion euros per year. According to calculations of the sports association, this amounts to seven horses securing one job. After football, the equestrian sport is the one with the greatest economic value, according to the KNHS. Dutch trainers are much in demand with teams all over the world. Many foreign teams come to the country regularly to participate in training camps lasting several weeks.



Our long coast offers fantastic opportunities for hacking on the beach.

Dutch Equestrian Federation


SPOGA HORSE - HOME GAME FOR THE NETHERLANDS

The largest and most important exhibition for the equestrian trade is the HorseEvent, the 15th edition of which will take place from 9 to 11 September this year. In 2015, 35,000 horse lovers - 86 per cent of visitors were female - visited the fair, which is held in Ermelo, 70 kilometres from Amsterdam. However, many Dutch manufacturers are also represented at the German trade fair spoga horse. "Many of the German companies have longer distances to travel," Jacob Janssen,

who represents the German saddle manufacturer G. Passier & Sohn in the Netherlands, praises the proximity to the Cologne trade fair location.

With "Divoza Horseworld" and "Epplejeck", the Netherlands have two large retail chains for horse riding equipment. Divoza has five shops distributed over the whole country, which are between 1000 and 2000 square metres in size and some of which have outdoor riding arenas for saddle adjustments as well as saddleries and embroidery and engraving studios attached. "We consider Divoza to be the market leader," managing director Geert Postema said. Both Divoza, which has a company history reaching back as far as 1928, and Epplejeck, which was founded in 2008, also have a large online shop.

“The percentage of riders we have in comparison to the number of inhabitants is perhaps the highest in the world.”



Geert Postema, Managing Director Divoza Horseworld”

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DIVOZA AND EPPEJECK - BROTHERS AND COMPETITORS



The constellation of the two major retail chains reminds a bit of the story of Adidas and Puma. Adam Postema is a co-owner of Epplejeck. The brother of Geert Postema is not supposed to have left Divoza entirely silent. The owner of “Epplejeck, Horse & Rider Superstores” with currently eleven branches is Jacqueline Freeke, Adam Postema’s wife. Epplejeck, which is very active with regard to Social Media, wants to be more fashionable as well as younger and fresher compared to Divoza and does not bank on price intensive brands so much. As yet, there is “no branch yet” in the German-speaking countries, Epplejeck writes. Divoza says much the same.



Facts and Data:

	Netherlands	Germany
Square kilometers	41,543	357,340
Inhabitants	16.9 million	82 Millionen
Largest population group	25 to 54 years (40.1 %)	25 to 54 years (41,4 %)
Number of births	10.8	8,5
Population growth	0,4 per cent	0,4 per cent
Gross domestic product per capita	40,288 Euro	37.000 Euro
Unemployment rate	6.9 per cent	4,7 per cent
Utilised agricultural area	1.85 million hectares (54.9 %)	6,7 million hectares (47,9 %)
Largest city in terms of inhabitants	Amsterdam (0.8 million)	Berlin (3,5 million)
Number of large cities (more than 100,000 inhabitants)	26	77
Equestrian umbrella association (members)	Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie/KNHS (191,791)	Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung/FN (697.126)
Number of riders	0.5 million	1,7 Millionen
FEI tournaments	161	331
Number of competition horses	50,000	147.000
Total number of horses	0.45 million	1,1 million
Equestrian trade fairs	none	spoga horse, Cologne
Most important equestrian fair	EventErmelo	Equitana, Essen
Number of equestrian magazines	7	more than 60
Number of equestrian specialist shops	400	Up to 1.500

Quellen: Angaben FFE, KNHS, Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI), Schätzungen

“*The Dutch are more courageous as far as colours and new concepts are concerned.*”



Henrik Berkel, head of sales for Germany at Imperial Riding

ciety Vendis Capital in 2013, he has completely withdrawn himself from the operative business of Hypo Retail with its retail stores since the beginning of 2016. Epplejeck bought parts of it and took over “Hyporama” in Rotterdam and “Hypoplaza” in The Hague, among others.

the large businesses bank on online trading even more than businesses in Germany. However, the other side of the story is that small shops recently lost revenue and often had to close down completely.

“Compared to Germany, the shops are more fashionable overall,” Jacob Janssen of Passier says. “They take in new products more quickly, but also get rid of them more quickly.” There is a reason why new brands are often tested in the Netherlands first. “The Dutch are more courageous as far as colours and new concepts are concerned,” Berkel confirms. One example was hooks for tying the horses which are designed in colours matching the overall concept. “You won’t find something like that anywhere else in Europe.”

EQUESTRIAN RETAILING - THE FASHION SPIRIT

There is a total of approximately 400 retail stores for equestrians in the Netherlands. “The Dutch are good traders,” Henrik Berkel of Imperial Riding says. Maybe this also entails that particularly