

Making international trade chains more sustainable at the port of Amsterdam

Port of Amsterdam's vision and ambition

Context

For 750 years, Amsterdam has been an international port and trading centre. The port is a logistics hub, where raw materials and products from all over the world come together for storage, transshipment, processing and transit to the European hinterland and other parts of the world. The extraction, cultivation, production, transport, storage and/or use of these raw materials and goods may have a negative impact on the environment or working conditions. We want to change this by making an active contribution.

Our ambition

As a link in the international trade chains, Port of Amsterdam feels involved and, driven by an intrinsic motivation, wants to contribute to making trade flows in and through the port of Amsterdam more sustainable. This is one of our strategic priorities ([Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#)). In this way, we want to counter the harmful effects of trade on climate, nature, and well-being. By responsible and sustainable trade flows we mean raw materials and products that throughout the chain are free from:

- Deforestation
- Loss of biodiversity
- Labour exploitation
- Negative impact on the climate, the environment and living conditions (emissions, water and soil pollution, safety)

Trade flows are often international and complex in nature, with many parties involved, different laws, regulations and interests, and dispersed responsibilities. It is therefore essential that there are who parties stand up and take the initiative to become more sustainable, even if their influence is only limited.

Our approach

EU laws and regulations are the basis for our actions to promote chain sustainability, but we go a step further. The tools we use for this are:

- Our establishment policy
- Active engagement with existing customers
- Participation in multi-stakeholder initiatives
- Active cooperation with chain partners
- Our procurement policy



Establishment policy

In 2022, we developed criteria to test the extent to which Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is part of the business operations of new companies. Using a questionnaire, we engage with new customers on issues such as energy consumption, local sustainability and innovation agenda, as well as on the origin and degree of sustainability of the raw materials and goods they procure and/or process. Based on the level of ambition we have set, we arrive at a set of contractual



agreements on chain sustainability. The extension, amendment and renewal of existing contracts are also important moments when we fine-tune sustainability goals, express mutual expectations, and record agreements in contracts. Our guiding principle here is continuous improvement. In this way, we can make the most of our (limited) influence to make trade chains more sustainable and counteract harmful impacts of raw materials flows and goods flows on climate, nature, and human well-being.

Active engagement with existing customers

The logical next step is for us to also actively engage with companies already established in the port, share our knowledge and extensive research on cargo flows in the port with them, explore together whether further sustainability is possible, and make agreements on steps to be taken.

Participation in multi-stakeholder initiatives

We recognise the power of broad and organised cooperation with different parties operating in the same chain. Together, we can bring about lasting change. Port of Amsterdam has therefore joined several multi-stakeholder initiatives as a member, such as the Dutch Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa ([DISCO](#)), the Round Table on Responsible Soy Association ([RTRS](#)), and [Bettercoal](#). In the future, this will be further expanded with relevant initiatives.

Active cooperation with chain partners

Port of Amsterdam also actively seeks individual cooperation with chain partners. For example, we review our decision-making with NGOs, engage with commercial parties on their activities and sustainability ambitions, and support foreign ports in their development (including cocoa ports in Côte d'Ivoire). This allows us to enrich our own decision-making continuously and use our expertise and experience for the sustainable development of logistics chains.

Procurement policy

We want to set a good example ourselves. We implement a sustainable procurement policy throughout our organisation to ensure that sustainability factors are always considered in our procurement decisions

Our role and influence

Port of Amsterdam has three core tasks: handling shipping traffic, constructing port infrastructure, and establishing companies in the Amsterdam port area. As a port, we provide opportunities for companies to receive cargo, store it, process it into semi-finished and finished products, use it, and transit it. We are an engaged facilitator of the established companies and logistics parties operating in the port (our customers), and in that sense, involved in what goods pass through the port.

Our influence varies from situation to situation. For example, we may have a larger influence on customers who buy goods that they process themselves than on customers who only provide a logistics service (transport, storage, transit) and are never the owner of any cargo. Our influence reaches furthest when new companies are established in the port, when a contract is extended or already established customers are expanding, because we can make and record agreements then.



We make every effort to investigate what is going on in the various cargo flows, in order to be well-informed and use our influence as much as possible to prevent or limit damage and abuses. We choose to communicate openly and proactively about our dilemmas, efforts, and challenges. In this way, we promote the sustainability of trade chains and contribute to the Amsterdam, Dutch and European objectives in the area of International Corporate Social Responsibility (ICSR). The [OECD guidelines](#) for multinational enterprises guide our approach, from our influence and commitment and always in collaboration with partners.