

Interreg



EUROPEAN UNION

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PROWATER

European Regional Development Fund



PES, the Holy Grail for a sustainable transition of rural areas in the Netherlands?

**Leo Santbergen (Brabantse Delta Water Board)
Antwerp, End Event, 12 October 2022**

The Dutch, drowning in multiple crises...



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Dutch legacy: 'landscape dehydration'

'Bringing owls to Athens and coals to Newcastle'

Substantial less
infiltration sites

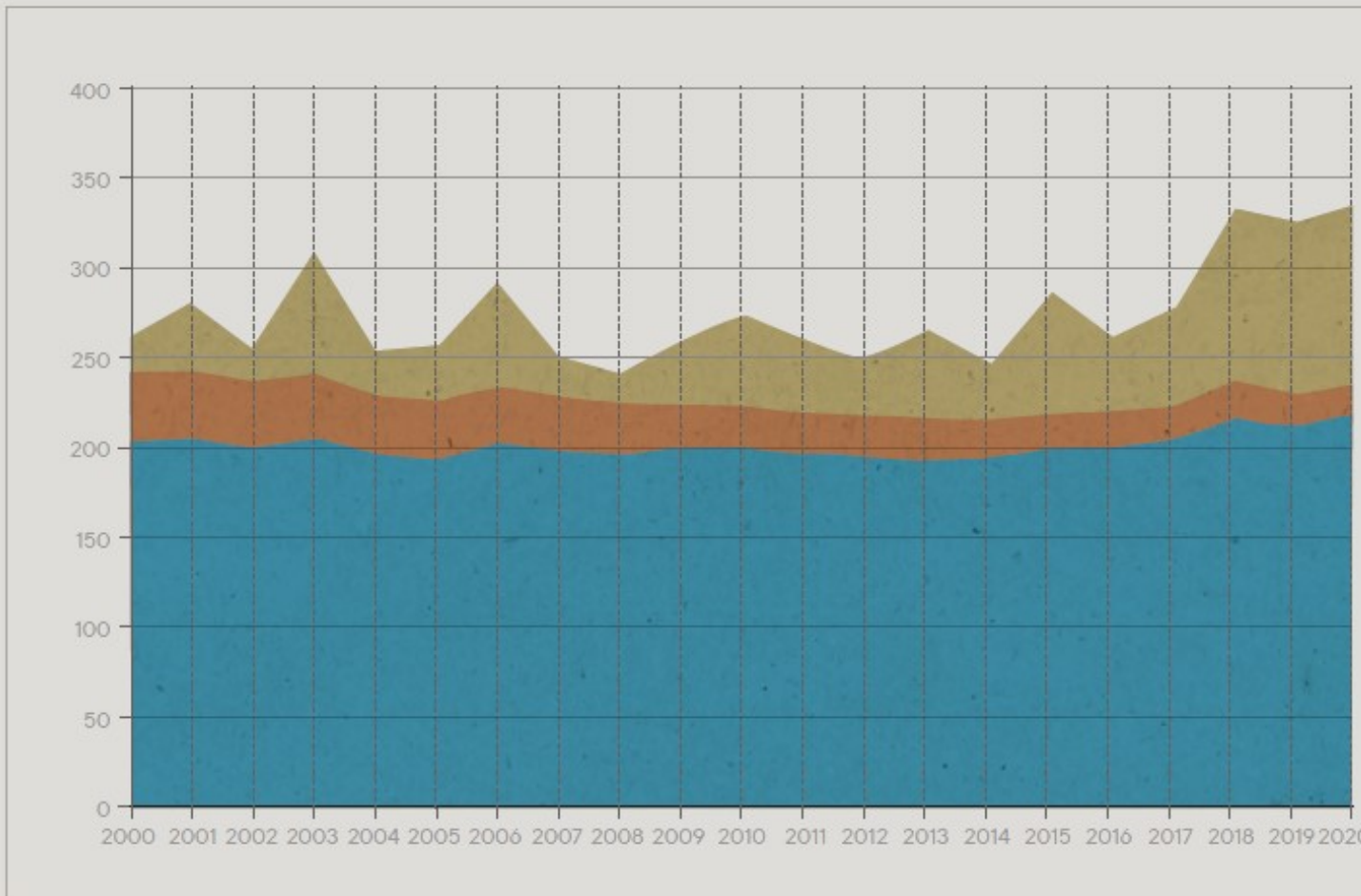
Over-exploitation of
(ground)water resources

Over-drainage,
normalisation & less
space for water

Water pollution

Unsustainable use of
highquality drinking
water (too low prices)

Who uses the groundwater in North-Brabant?



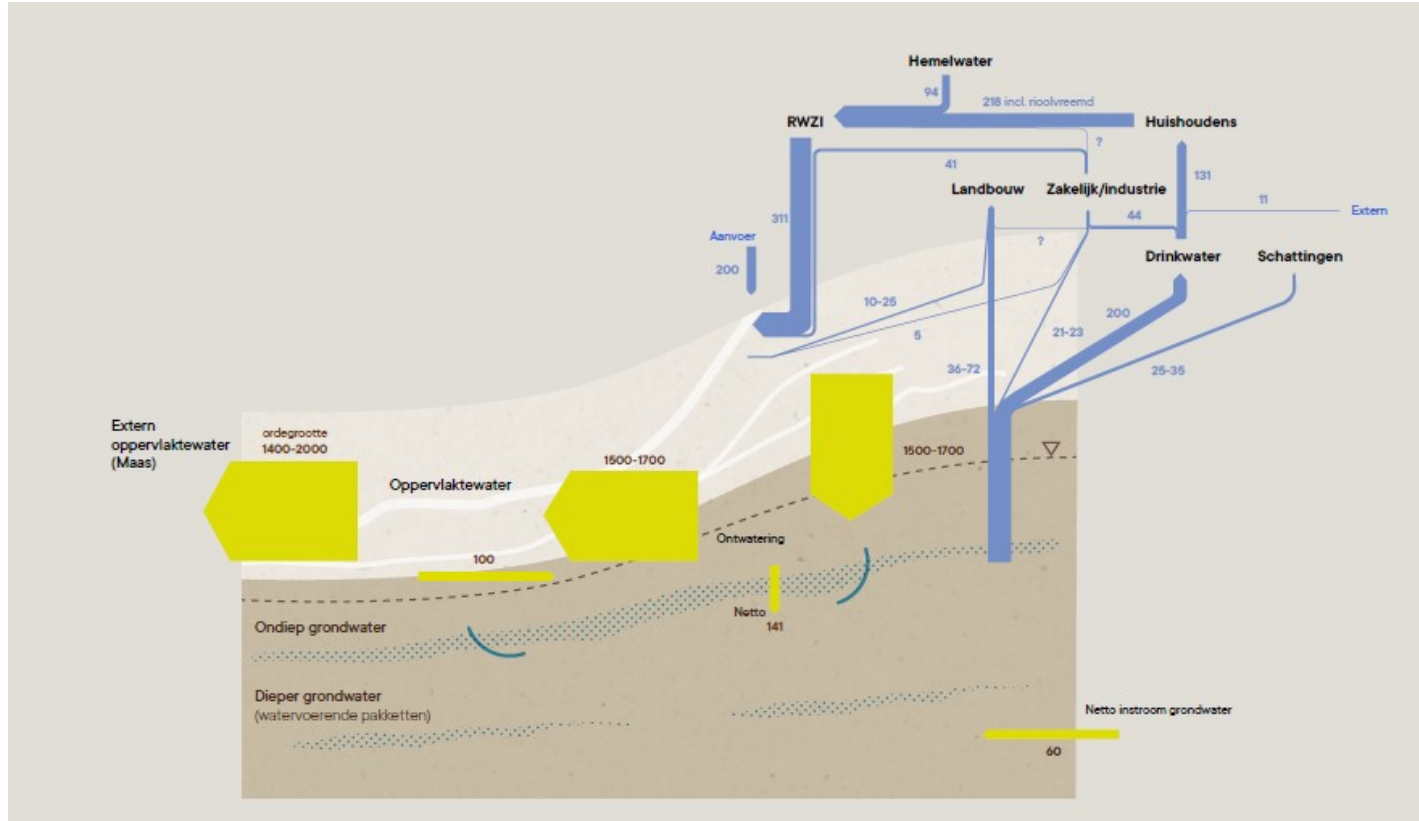
2. Agriculture

3. Industry

1. Drinking water



Where is the river?



PES in the Netherlands, or lack thereof?



- Strong government & tax driven system:
 - Wastewater treatment, flood defence & river restoration projects
 - Low prices for drinking water
 - Low taxes for ground water management
- No fair prices for ecosystem services in water and food chains
- Investments in climate adaptation do not match the urgency and political ambitions
- Promising PES-like experiments at local and regional scale (landscape auctions, from farm to fork, carbon credits)

No tomorrow without water

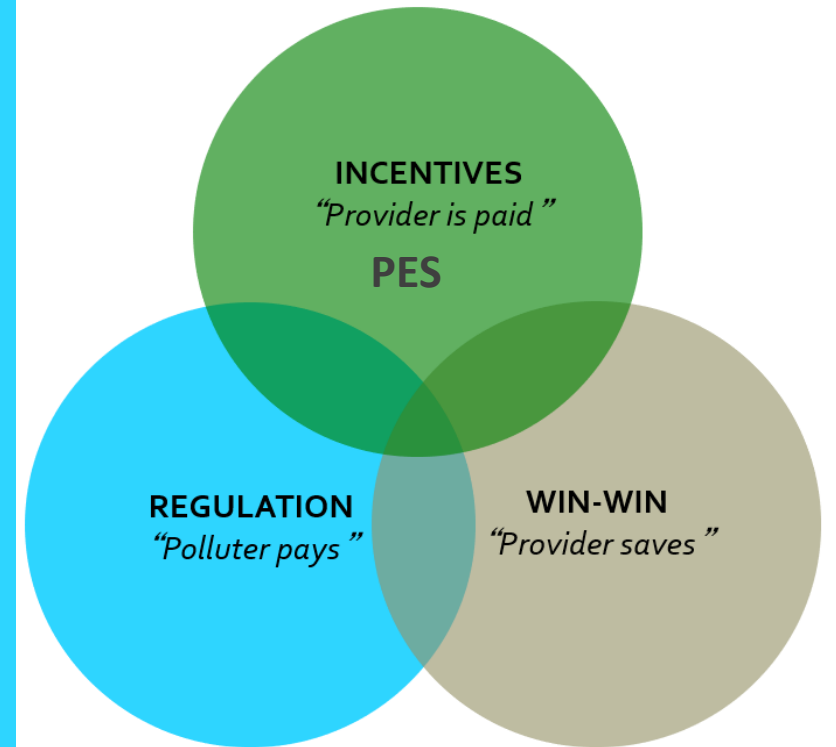
(advice of drought committee Brabant – September 2022)



- We need an multiple-issue, integrated land-water transition
- Working with nature – restoration of 'natural' water-landscapes
- International cooperation (shared (ground)water catchments)
- Make more use of water services pricing and marketing

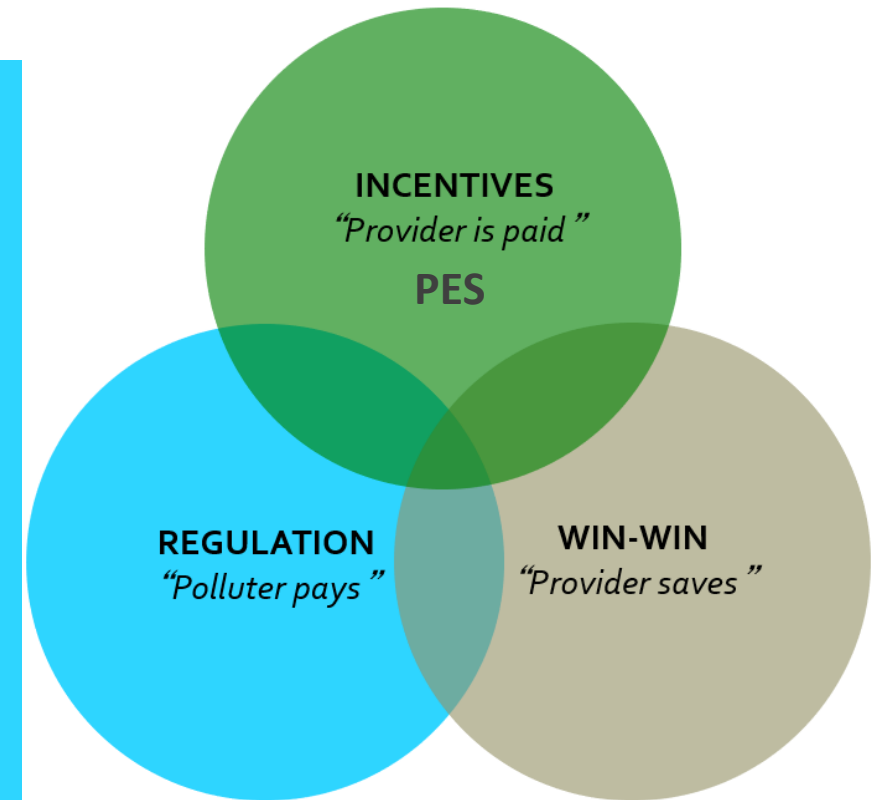
PES in Brabant (1a): **POLICY** & Regulation

1. **More infiltration & retention**
2. **Extensive land and water use buffer zones**
3. Innovation agenda for local water cycles
4. Diversity of drinking water sources
5. Water culture transition programme

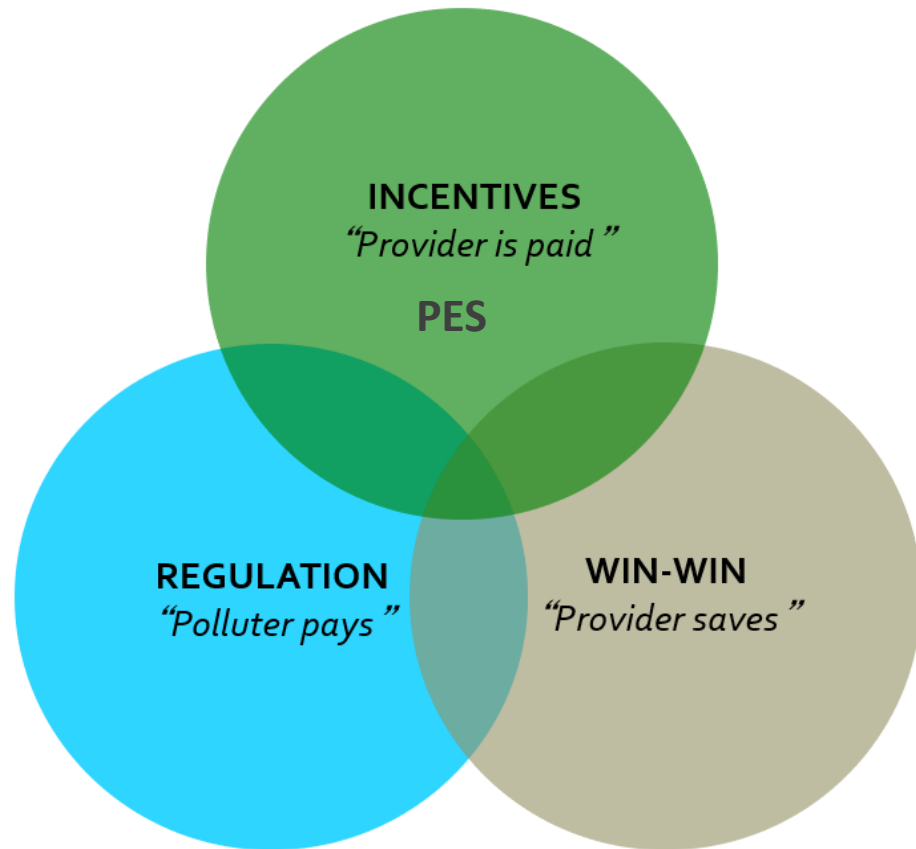


PES in Brabant (1b): Policy & **REGULATION**

6. Volume-related charges for (ground)water withdrawals
7. Adapt groundwater permits for nature protection
8. Permits for all (existing and new) groundwater wells
9. Apply instruments for climate-proof urban areas
10. Obligatory infiltration in new urban areas



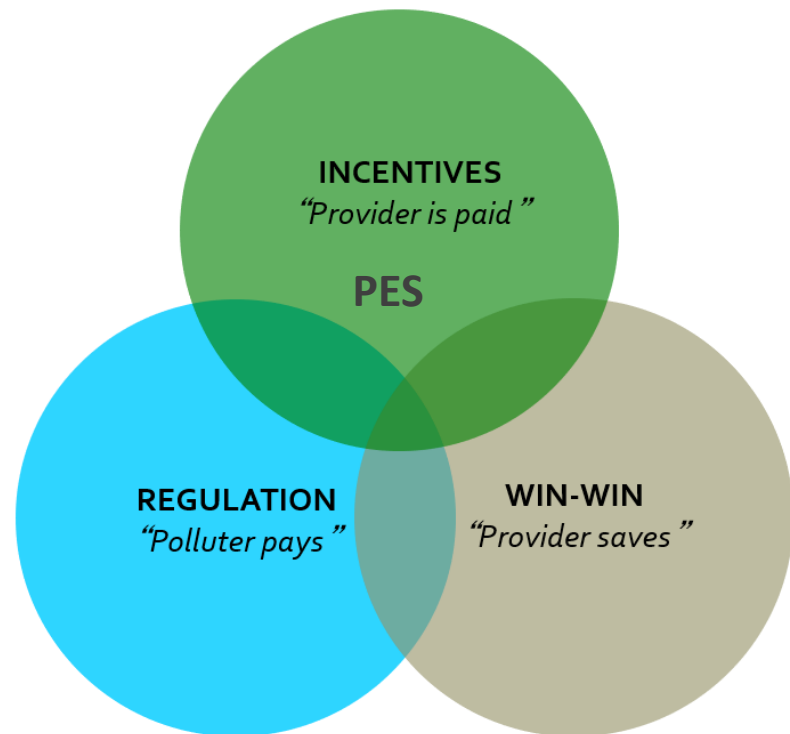
PES in Brabant (2): Win-Win



11. Water savings and recirculation by all sectors.

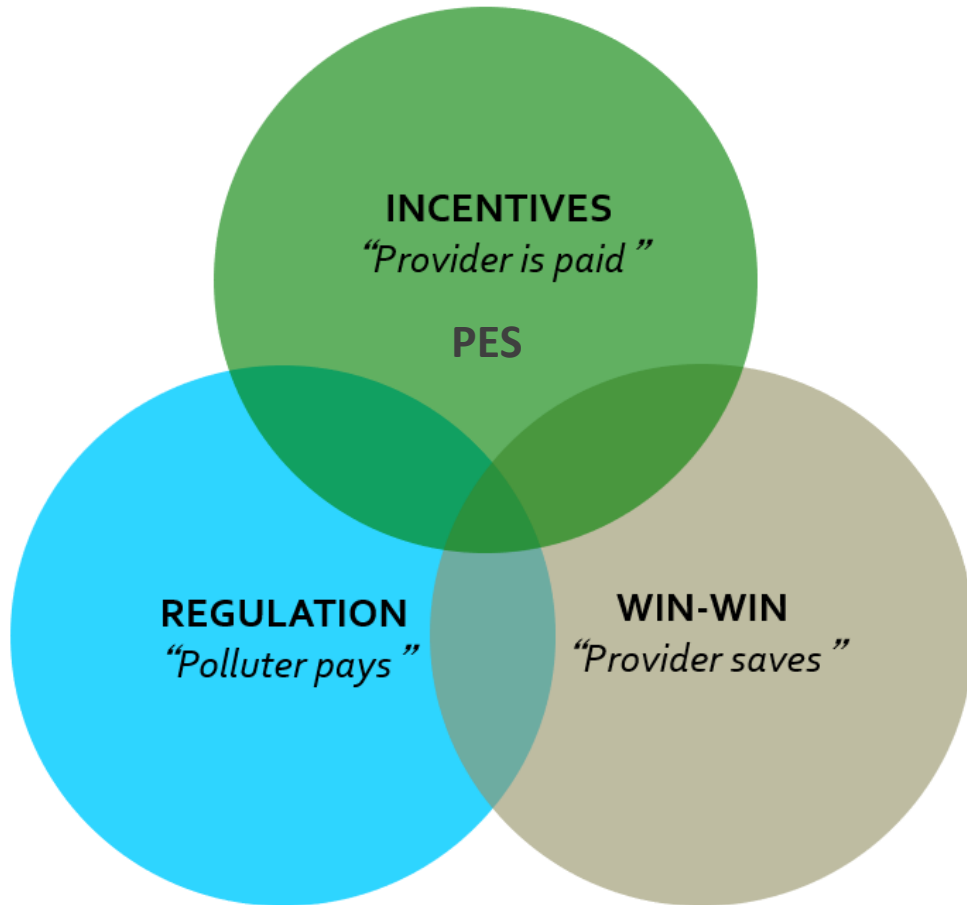
12. Reuse of treated wastewater by farmers (as provided by water boards)

PES in Brabant (3a): (adapting existing) **INCENTIVES**



- More transition investment capacity for drinking water companies
- Reduce drinking water use by 'volume related charges'
- Substantial increase of public investment for the 'drought transition'

PES in Brabant (3b): **FACILITATE** investment in adaptation measures



- Governance: from 'polder consensus' to accelerated decision-making
- Provincial Drought Fund & regional Drought Director.
- Catchment-based climate-adaptation visions and programmes
- International cooperation
- Regional knowledge and innovation agenda on circular water use
- Create a market for water-related services

Conclusion:

- ❑ PES is not the Holy Grail, but a promising tool in guiding the needed transition towards 'climate- adaptive' water-landscapes.
- ❑ Within the Dutch context, policy and regulation as well as public funding keep playing a key-role.
- ❑ Additionally, water-pricing and water services markets are needed to enlarge public consciousness and stimulate more sustainable behaviour.