



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on March 20, 2023

Farmers' Party Wins Big in Dutch Regional Election, Shaking Political Landscape

In regional elections in the Netherlands on March 15, BBB (*BoerBurgerBeweging*, Farmer-Citizen Movement) party came in first in what is described as a major shake-up in the country's political landscape.

Leveraging protests against the leftist government's environmental policies that undermined farmers' livelihoods, the BBB seemed poised to have won more Senate seats than incumbent Prime Minister Mark Rutte's ruling VVD party.

An exit poll predicted that the BBB, only established in 2019, would win 15 out of 75 Senate seats, trumping the ruling center-right party VVD by 10. Although the BBB had no Senate seats before the vote, if the exit polls are accurate, the party is slated to constitute the largest bloc in the chamber, along with the Labour-Green group. The Senate has the power to veto legislation agreed in the Lower House of parliament.

Based on Dutch electoral procedures, the results of last Wednesday's regional elections would determine the allocation of Senate seats in May.

The ascendancy of BBB has been a major setback for Rutte's governing coalition, fueling opposition to its stated aim to dramatically decrease nitrogen emissions on farms, the issue upon which BBB was set up in 2019.

Founded by agricultural journalist Caroline van der Plas to counter emissions cuts and what she regarded as the dominance of the green and animal-rights lobbyists in the Dutch government, the BBB has asserted that the nitrogen problem has been exaggerated. The party added that suggested solutions have been unfairly enacted against farmers, causing food-production shortages and the closure of many farms.

Van der Plas characterized Wednesday's election victory as a lethal blow to the government's plan to cut emissions in a victory speech.

"Nobody can ignore us any longer," BBB leader Caroline van der Plas told broadcaster Radio 1.

"Voters have spoken out very clearly against this government's policies."

The BBB shot to prominence after four years of farmer-led demonstrations against the globalist Dutch government's contentious plans to halve nitrogen emissions by 2030, primarily by restricting livestock farming. In turn, Dutch farmers have resorted to massive street protests and blockades against the



AP Images
Pro-farmer protest in Netherlands



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globalist diktats to reduce livestock numbers and fertilizers. Many observers have cautioned of a concocted food shortage by the globalist elites as well as the vulnerability of around 20,000 agricultural jobs as a result.

However, with the BBB scoring 31 percent of the vote in some rural provinces, Wednesday's election outcome would empower the BBB to veto the disputed nitrogen emission legislation in the Dutch Senate and give the party control over regional councils that implement state policy.

Also, the BBB targeted urban voters incensed by construction limitations owing to due to an unpopular court decision to step up regulations on nitrogen emissions. Last year, a court had ruled that a major carbon-capture project might have to be stopped as it fell short of European environmental guidelines, dealing a blow to construction projects throughout the country.

The planned "Porthos" project in the Rotterdam port area, which would have been Europe's largest carbon capture and storage facility, was poised to reduce the country's yearly CO₂ emissions by about two percent.

Nonetheless, the court had ruled last year that the project's environmental footprint had to include nitrogen emissions, which were excluded from the project's evaluation based on an exemption given by the Dutch government for all building activities, a move that the court said breached European law.

In response, the Dutch builders' association slammed the ruling as "dramatic" and said, "All projects that have not yet been licensed will have to reapply for an individual environmental permit. This will cause enormous delays, with harmful consequences for house seekers, the energy transition and the Dutch economy."

True enough, the nitrogen problem has undermined construction in the Netherlands as "green" alarmists have emerged victorious in a wave of court cases ordering the government to limit emissions before granting new building grants, on the pretext of "green" conservation.

BBB won a single Lower House seat in 2021, but its popularity has soared due to rising skepticism of the government and public fury over issues such as immigration.

Rumors are now circulating that BBB's win could spark the early implosion of the four-party ruling coalition under Rutte, who is now likely to have to cooperate with Left parties to pass laws. The incumbent government of Rutte has not enjoyed a Senate majority since the previous provincial elections in 2019.

Additionally, the two most cooperative parties, Labour and GreenLeft, appeared poised to have retained their seats, keeping their combined group at a par with BBB to possibly adequately back Rutte's policies. Meanwhile, Rutte's government, in its fourth consecutive term since 2010, has plummeted to a 20-percent approval rating, its lowest in 10 years.

According to a survey [published](#) on February 28 by the Amsterdam-based daily morning newspaper *De Telegraaf*, more than eight in 10 Dutch citizens (83 percent) think that Rutte should resign as Prime Minister amid what has been regarded as a scandalous report — prepared and unveiled by a parliamentary committee — on natural-gas extraction in one of the country's largest cities.

The in-depth research [report](#), disclosed February 27, by the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry on Natural Gas Extraction in Groningen, posited that "the interests of the people of Groningen have been systematically ignored in the natural gas extraction" in the city, causing "disastrous consequences for them."



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Besides, the report — touted as the most serious investigative tool of the House of Representatives, the country's lower house, at times when it decides to pursue investigations — found that Rutte did not take into consideration the plight of the people of Groningen, notwithstanding the gravity of the situation.

Gas extraction from the 900-square-kilometer Groningen gas field, which has been in production since 1963, is widely touted to have been the cause of a rising number of earthquakes, with increasing magnitude and consequent destruction to buildings, particularly after 2001. The gas field has, to date, generated 2,246 billion cubic meters of natural gas and contributed €363 billion in revenue to the Dutch treasury.

Geert Wilders, the leader of the Party for Freedom (ID), was one prominent Dutch politician who called for Rutte's resignation. In a tweet, Wilders posted a photo of the *De Telegraaf* article, cited the 83-percent figure, and wrote, "Rutte must resign. [His] position is untenable."



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