Outline of initiative in the Netherlands regarding biodiversity and international tourism

Summary

In the Netherlands an initiative has been started to develop an integral approach to biodiversity-friendly tourism, focusing on tourists from the Netherlands with a destination abroad. It will **involve** *a whole* **range** *of* **activities, such as information from travel** *agencies,* **decisions** *by the* **public** *to book trips, effects of travelling, possibilities for reducing negative* **impact** *of* **holiday accommodation, activities undertaken** *by* **tourists abroad, etc.** *The* **initiative involves all relevant** *stakeholders from* **the** *public* **and private sector,** *following an* **interactive approach.**

Introduction

Biodiversity and tourism are closely interrelated. A sound and biodiverse environment is usually highly appreciated by tourists. It is the basic capital of the tourist sector. On the other hand, tourist activities have a severe impact on nature and the environment.

The tourist sector is growing very rapidly, becoming one of the largest economic sectors in the world. As a result, the pressure from tourist activities on biodiversity has also increased enormously. But the increase of tourism does offer opportunities for increased support for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. For this it is essential that tourism takes full account of nature and the environment, and that revenues from biodiversity-friendly tourism are shared by local and indigenous communities.

Background

The need for sustainable tourism has been addressed extensively in Dutch policies and programmes on tourism and outdoor recreation, on nature conservation, and on the environment. Society in general in the Netherlands has also been very active in developing sustainable tourism, including travel agencies, transport companies, consumer groups and environmental organisations.

However these initiatives have so far paid relatively little attention to the specific interrelationship between tourism and biodiversity, in particular as regards the influence of Dutch tourist travelling abroad. Internationally, the issue of sustainable tourism has been placed high on the agenda, in particular in the context of the CSD, CBD, World Tourism Organisation and UNEP. The Dutch government, in revising its policy for biodiversity, as laid down in the national report submitted to the COP of the CBD, has therefore decided to start intensive consultations on biodiversity and international tourism.

The focus of the discussions in developing a revised policy for sustainable tourism and biodiversity, as part of the revision of the Dutch policy for biodiversity which is currently taking place, is to initiate an integral approach to biodiversity-friendly tourism, focusing on tourist from the Netherlands with a destination abroad. This is so called "outgoing tourism" in the Netherlands.

This integral approach will take into account the whole chain of actions related to outgoing tourism, such as the background on which tourists make their decision to book a trip, the information from travel agencies, the effects of travelling, the possible reductions of negative impact of accommodation at the destination, the activities undertaken by tourists, the contribution of tourism to local economies and indigenous communities, etc.

Annex 1 elaborates this in more detail. This is in fact applying the so called "integrative chain management" to tourism, which could be compared to a life cycle analysis used to assess the environmental effects of for example the production of industrial goods.

For this purpose a project has been started, aiming at analysing and initiating concrete measures for enabling biodiversity friendly tourism, through:

> gaining better insight in the problems related to outgoing tourism

> developing a common vision of all involved in the Netherlands towards achieving sustainable tourist products

> analysing the respective roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved, such as travel agencies, transporters, environmental groups etc.

> finding possible mechanisms for intervening in the whole chain of events relevant to outgoing tourism

> developing instruments and measures for concrete actions by the different parties involved (government, sector, consumers etc.).

Approach

The project is set up as an open, interactive policy process, including interviews, workshops, case studies, etc. Recognising the crucial role of the private sector and its willingness to take up responsibilities, there are no directives envisaged from the government representatives in the project. Participants are invited to work out concrete measures which they are willing to implement themselves, as part of an overall action plan. In addition possibilities for joint action will be explored, such as awareness campaigns and (eco)labelling.

The project will be implemented through a step-by-step approach:

1st phase   inventory of perceived problems, visions, roles and responsibilities through in depth interviews of key players representing the different aspects of tourism. This will be co-ordinated by the existing Initiative Group for Outgoing Tourism, which includes several ministries, industries and ngo's.

2nd phase   selection of 5 to 6 example destinations, which are frequently visited by Dutch tourists and application of the integral chain approach for these. Possible examples would be: the Alps, the Mediterranean, a destination in Central/Eastern Europe, the Netherlands Antilles and Costa Rica. A popular destination within the Netherlands is also being considered in order to compare the approach to destinations at home and abroad.

3rd phase further elaboration of visions, roles and responsibilities, possible mechanisms and measures. Particular attention will be given to the need for and feasibility of the development of (eco)labelling as an instrument for sustainable and biodiversity friendly tourism.

4th phase final assessment of the integral chain approach and the possibilities for its implications through the activities proposed in the third phase a) in general and b) for other destinations. For this a broad workshop will be organised.

5th phase final reporting and development of policies, programmes and actions by the various parties involved, including drafting of a revised national policy on this issue, as an element of the revised national policy on biodiversity.

Forfurther information

Please contact the
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries
Department of Nature Management, Henk Eggink
Postbus 20401, 2500 **EK The Hague, The Netherlands**
tel.: +31-70-378.5007, **fax :** +31-70-378.6146
e-mail: H.J.Eggink@N.AGRO.NL

Annex - illustration of *the integral chain approach to tourism*

part of the chain & possible instruments:

physical planning, tourism policy and planning
national and local policies and programmes, international agreements and co-operation, EIA, training, integration in development Co-operation, involvement of local stakeholders, inclusion in the development of tourist products, funding for sustainable tourism, distribution of travel peaks through holiday regulation

product development by suppliers
inclusion in the development of tourist products, environment-care systems by companies, (eco)labelling of products, dispersal in time of products offered

consumer *choices*
promotion, pricing, awareness, (eco)labelling

transport
alternative ways and means (door-to-door), transport regulation policies and measures, comparable information on environmental effects of different forms of travel, internalising environmental costs / economic incentives, part of (eco)labelling

accommodation
environment-care systems for hotels etc., criteria as set through physical planning and tourist policies and planning, (eco)labelling

tourist activities
planning/zoning of use taking into account carrying capacity of biodiversity/nature, economic (dis)incentives, additional funds for biodiversity conservation, contribution of tourism to local **economies and indigenous communities, background information included on, e.g. souvenirs (CITES), awareness, (eco)labelling**