About the Netherlands
Commonly known for bicycles, clogs, canals, windmills, tulips and cheese, the Netherlands is a small nation in Northwestern Europe, bordered by the North Sea, Belgium and Germany. Although the country is often referred to as Holland, this is technically incorrect, as North and South Holland comprise only two of its twelve provinces. A parliamentary democratic constitutional monarchy, the government of the Netherlands consists of ministers and the Queen. The government and parliament are located in The Hague, but the capital city is Amsterdam.

The Netherlands is densely populated, inhabiting nearly 16.5 million people. It is a low-lying country, about one quarter of which is below sea level. A substantial amount of the Netherlands is reclaimed land, which is protected by a system of dikes. Bicycles are a common mode of transportation—the country has at least 15,000 km (932 miles) of bicycle paths and twice as many bikes as cars. The official language is Dutch, but people from the province of Friesland also speak Frisian. Most Dutch people also speak English and many also speak German or French.

The Dutch economy is one of the strongest in the world and is the sixth largest within the European Union. As the third largest exporter of agriculture products, it produces 60% of the world's flowers but is also known for production of fruits, vegetables and dairy products. The country has a moderate climate, with relatively cool summers and mild winters.

Food habits
Much of the cooking habits in the Netherlands have been split between traditional Dutch cuisine (primarily meat and potatoes) and food from the former Dutch colonies of Indonesia and Surinam. The Dutch eat much more bread than many other cultures—about 60 kg of bread (132 pounds) per year—often in the form of sandwiches or single slices (boterhamen) covered with various toppings ranging from margarine, sliced meat or cheese, peanut butter, jam or candy sprinkles. Potatoes, whether boiled, mashed or fried, are found at nearly every hot meal. Dairy products are also very important in the Netherlands: the Dutch consume an average of 140 liters (4734 ounces) of dairy products each year, more than any other nation in the world. The Dutch are also big coffee drinkers, consuming about three cups per day. Other traditional Dutch favorites include Gouda cheese, pea soup, Dutch apple pie, raw herring, vla (Dutch custard), drop (black licorice candies) and pancakes.

Health Care
All people living in the Netherlands are required to show proof of health insurance coverage from one of approximately 40 different private health insurance providers. Individuals pay a monthly premium and sometimes receive nominal contributions from their employers. The government also provides income-based assistance for payment of the premiums. Once insured, each person has a local doctor, or huisarts, who is the first point of contact for any non-emergency medical or health issue. Specialists are located in hospitals, but must patients must first be referred by their huisarts. Prescriptions are written by doctors, but patients must have them filled at the local pharmacy or apotheek.
Dietetics and nutrition training and professional roles

To become a dietitian in the Netherlands, students must attend one of four colleges in the country, which offer Nutrition & Dietetics as a field of study:

- Hogeschool van Amsterdam
- Haagse Hogeschool
- Hanze Hogeschool, Hogeschool van Groningen
- Hogeschool Arnhem en Nijmegen

After completing dietetics education and training, dietitians in the Netherlands often pursue careers in nutrition counseling in clinical settings or private practice or they work in foodservice settings.

For careers in nutrition research, food science or the food industry, students often pursue a different educational track to become nutritionists. Many obtain master’s or doctorate degrees at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, the leading university in Europe for life sciences.

Dietetics and nutrition in the Netherlands are considered two distinct disciplines, therefore dietitians and nutritionists usually have very different professional roles. Educational requirements for dietitians are equivalent to bachelor’s level, whereas nutritionists require at least master’s level degrees, therefore nutritionists are often held in higher professional regard.

Some important health/nutrition organizations in the Netherlands:

**Dutch Association of Dietitians**
The Dutch Association of Dietitians (Nederlandse Vereniging van Diëtisten, or NVD) is the national professional organization for dietitians in the Netherlands. Founded in 1941, the NVD currently has about 2400 members. The NVD’s mission is to position dietitians as specialists in the area of nutrition and behavior in relation to health and disease. In addition, the NVD aims to improve the quality of service provided by dietitians, to promote the expertise of dietitians, to consult with third parties (such as health care providers, insurers, government, patients and consumers) and to provide information to the media and NVD members.

**Contact:**
Dutch Association of Dietitians
(Nederlandse Vereniging van Diëtisten)
Postbus 526
3990 GH Houten
The Netherlands
Phone: +31306346222
Email: bureau@nvdietist.nl
Web: [http://www.nvdietist.nl](http://www.nvdietist.nl)

**Netherlands Nutrition Centre**
Funded by the Netherlands Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) the Netherlands Nutrition Centre (Stichting Voedingscentrum Nederland) is the primary source for nutrition and food information in the Netherlands. The organization was created to provide scientifically founded, honest information about healthy and safe food and food quality. The Centre aims to increase consumer understanding of food information, to encourage healthy and safe food consumption and to help consumers make informed choices and improve their health. The organization often interacts with scientific, commercial, political and public communities in order to further their

**Contact:**
Netherlands Nutrition Centre
(Stichting Voedingscentrum Nederland)
Eisenhowerlaan 108
2517 KL Den Haag
The Netherlands
Phone: +31703068888
Email: contact form
Web: [http://www.voedingscentrum.nl](http://www.voedingscentrum.nl)
mission.

Health Council of the Netherlands
The Health Council of the Netherlands (Gezondheidsraad) is an independent scientific advisory body with the purpose of advising the government and Parliament on the current level of knowledge with respect to public health issues and health (services) research. The organization provides solicited and unsolicited advice in the form of scientific support for the development of government policy. The Health Council addresses health issues related to health care, nutrition and the environment.

Contact:
Health Council of the Netherlands (Gezondheidsraad)
PO Box 16052
2500 BB The Hague
The Netherlands
Phone: +31703407520
Email: info@gr.nl
Web: http://www.gr.nl

National Institute for Public Health & the Environment
The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) works primarily for the Dutch government to conduct research, monitoring, modeling and risk assessment to support policy on public health, food, safety and the environment. The RIVM mainly works for three ministries: Health, Welfare and Sport; Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality. In addition, the RIVM cooperates with international bodies such as the European Union and United Nations organizations, including WHO, FAO and UNEP.

Contact:
RIVM
PO Box 1
3720 BA Bilthoven
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)30-2749111
Email: info@rivm.nl
Web: www.rivm.nl

Employment opportunities
Most dietitians in the Netherlands are Dutch, they speak Dutch, and they work in traditional dietetic fields such as clinical (in hospitals, nursing homes, private practice) or foodservice establishments. Fluency in Dutch is almost always necessary to work in these areas. However, other opportunities exist for dietitians in the Netherlands, such as working in the food industry or for multinational research organizations.

Obtaining a working permit
It is necessary to obtain a residency and working permit to be employed in the Netherlands. This documentation can be obtained in different ways, depending on the timing and purpose of your residency (family reunification, recruitment from Dutch company, etc). More information can be found at the Dutch immigration website, http://www.ind.nl/EN/index.asp. As income tax rates in the Netherlands are higher than many other countries, some expats receive tax benefits for working in the Netherlands.

Continuing education opportunities
As the Netherlands is a nation rich in food, agriculture and nutrition expertise, many nutrition and health conferences are held there. Continuing education opportunities exist at various seminars, lectures, conferences and workshops.

Netherlands Country Representative Contact:
Erin M. Boyd, MS, MPH, RD