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## **Strategy and Environmental Management in the Land of Milk and Cheese**

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### **Abstract**

Over the past few years, the importance of sector characteristics with regard to companies' environmental performance and policies has become widely acknowledged. In research on the greening of industry, much attention has been paid to the most polluting sectors, for which environmental issues became a direct cause for concern due to societal and regulatory pressures. Consequently, the automobile industry, the chemical industry, and the pulp and paper industry have been intensively studied. For most firms in these sectors, the environment is a factor of growing importance within the strategy process. Many sector-related research has concentrated on these firms.

Much less attention has been paid to sectors in which the environment became a cause for concern, but in a more targeted way - for example, because absolute pollution levels were relatively small compared to other sectors or impacts were only due to specific parts, such as energy or packaging. In addition, if these sectors were analysed, it frequently concerned firms which operated in different regulatory contexts. This complicates generalisation as regulation turns out to be one of the main drivers influencing environmental management. If firms in one country were selected, this usually involved the United States.

This paper presents the results of empirical research in one moderately-polluting sector in one country, which incorporates firms from different nationalities and different sizes. As part of a larger project in which the influence of cultural aspects on environmental management are addressed as well, this part focuses on the way in which strategic and market conditions affect environmental management in the dairy industry in the Netherlands. From the 17 dairy producers in the Netherlands 11 have been interviewed, both at corporate and plant level. At corporate level this encompassed the highest environmental officer and a board member, at the plant level the environmental manager and the location manager. This resulted in over 70 interviews spread over 26 production locations and 11 corporate or division headquarters. The main environmental impact in the sector originates from water usage, waste water, energy and packaging. The regulatory context consists of covenants and European agricultural policy. The main environmentally-related market development is the emergence of ecological dairy

products.

The paper will present a characterisation of the sector and its different types of firms, identifying types of strategies and markets in which they are operating. This will be linked with the environmental management performance of these firms, which has been assessed on the basis of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Conclusions will be drawn on the relationship between the two.