

## **Impact of farming 2,000 tons of fish per year on Aruban nature and the environment not yet fully clear**

**In the opinion of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA), the environmental assessment report on the impact of an annual production of farmed red snapper in Aruba eventually reaching 2,000 tons is incomplete. More insight should be provided into the potential consequences for the coral reef. In addition it has not yet been established whether there is adequate capacity to manage wastewater from the project and future developments in Aruba.**

Petros Aquaculture Operations has proposed commercially farming red snapper in Aruba for export and local consumption. The project will comprise a hatchery, processing facility and pier on the island, along with fish cages located at sea. Initially, the annual production will be 500 tons of fish, with plans to increase to 2,000 tons over time. The company's environmental impact assessment report outlines the project's implications for nature and the environment. At the request of the Aruban government, the NCEA has evaluated the report against the highest international standards. The NCEA does not assess whether a project is desirable but looks solely at the quality of the information presented in the report.

Simone Filippini, chair of the advisory working group, remarks, 'Aruba is demonstrating leadership by commissioning an environmental impact report and having it independently assessed. With the additions we propose, Aruba will be able to make a decision that considers all environmental, social, and socio-economic impacts of the project'.

Among its recommendations, the NCEA emphasises the need for more information on Aruba's highly vulnerable marine ecosystem. The coral reef has been in serious decline for years and could face further damage from waste produced by the fish in the cages. Therefore, the NCEA advises assessing the impact on the coral reef of producing 2,000 tons of fish annually. Additionally, the NCEA recommends to explore options to treat wastewater within the project if the island's treatment plants have insufficient capacity.

The NCEA furthermore highlights uncertainties about the project's practical feasibility and its environmental and socio-economic implications. It stresses the importance of building in an interim decision moment at which the government decides whether to scale up annual production to 2,000 tons on the basis of thorough monitoring and evaluation of the project's initial phase.

The Aruban government has indicated its intention to adopt the NCEA's recommendations, and the environmental assessment report will be supplemented with additional information in the near future before being resubmitted to the NCEA for a final opinion.

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*The independent Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment provides guidance on the content and quality of environmental impact assessment reports. It establishes a working group of independent experts for each project. The NCEA does not draft environmental impact reports; this responsibility lies with the project's initiator. The decision to proceed with the project is made by the competent authority: in this case, several government ministers of Aruba. For more information, visit [www.commissiemer.nl](http://www.commissiemer.nl).*

### **Note to editors**

You can find the full [advisory report](#) on the website in Dutch, Papiamentu and English. For more information, please call our press officer: Daan de Wit, 00 31 6 15 28 37 74.