

Environmental impact report on farming 2,000 tonnes of fish in Aruba, despite additions, not yet complete

More information on the environmental impact is needed for the farming of red snapper in the sea off Aruba, according to the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment. Following an earlier advisory report from the Commission, the environmental impact report has been significantly improved but is not yet complete. For example, the impact on the coral reef at an annual production volume of 2,000 tonnes of fish is not fully understood. In addition, it is unclear whether there will be sufficient capacity on the island in time to treat the wastewater resulting from the processing of the fish and other future initiatives on Aruba.

The company Petros Aquaculture Operations has proposed commercially farming red snapper in Aruba for export and local consumption. The project will comprise a hatchery, a processing facility and a pier on the island, along with fish cages located at sea. Initially, the production will be 500 tonnes of fish per year, with plans to increase to 2,000 tonnes over time. The ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Primary Sector of Aruba has indicated that, for any potential future upscaling, one or more additional permits will be required.

The environmental impact report describes the consequences for nature and the environment. At the request of the Aruban government, the Commission has assessed the report against the highest international standards. It does not assess whether the project is desirable, but only looks at the quality of the information in the report, needed by competent authority to make a well-founded decision.

In an earlier advisory report, the Commission indicated that important information was still missing. Petros has followed up on a large part of these recommendations, but not all of them.

The environmental impact and wastewater treatment for an annual production of 2,000 tonnes of fish have not yet been sufficiently assessed. An environmental impact report is specifically intended to identify short- and long-term environmental impacts, including anticipated expansions of the project. Due to the uncertainty as to whether there is sufficient capacity for wastewater treatment on the island for a production of 2,000 tonnes of fish, there is a risk that this water will ultimately end up in the sea. This could have significant consequences for the health of people in Aruba, for example.

The consequences for the coral reef are also not yet clear. The report does not specify the exact impact on the marine ecosystem and how this relates to the existing impact of other activities in and around Aruba. This information is necessary for the Aruban government to base its decision on whether the additional impact caused by Petros is acceptable.

The independent Commission for Environmental Assessment advises on the content and quality of environmental impact reports. It sets up a working group of independent experts for each project. The Commission does not write environmental impact reports; this is done by the initiator. The competent authority – in this case, a number of ministers of the country of Aruba – decides on the project. See also www.commissiemer.nl.

Editor's note

The [full advisory report](#) is available 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.