

Kingdom Report Sounds Alarm on Biodiversity Conservation in the Dutch Caribbean

Only Four of Twenty Biodiversity Targets On Track to Achieve Goals in the Dutch Caribbean

A recently published report issued by the Kingdom of the Netherlands has sounded the alarm that only four of twenty 'Aichi Targets' of the 'Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)' have been achieved in the Dutch Caribbean, highlighting increased need for conservation management actions in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. The CBD is an international agreement under the United Nations Environment Program that aims to provide an international legal framework to support the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, ensuring the preservation of biological diversity of contracting parties. In order to achieve this, the contracting parties to the CBD have established a set of goals and targets to promote conservation and sustainable use of natural resources worldwide known as the Aichi Targets. The Kingdom of the Netherlands highlights that of the twenty targets which were set for 2020 only four are on track of being achieved on time. These results stress the immediate need for action by conservation groups and government agencies alike. The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) stresses that although current support from the Netherlands is mainly aimed at the islands of Saba, St. Eustatius and Bonaire which are now constitutionally part of the Netherlands, nature knows no borders and it is therefore of the utmost importance that the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the

nature conservation plans and projects of all six Dutch Caribbean Islands.

The current Strategic Plan for Diversity was signed by all contracting parties of the CBD convention in 2010 and runs through 2020. The plan highlights twenty biodiversity benchmarks known as the "Aichi Biodiversity Targets". Every five years, each participating country including the Kingdom of the Netherlands is expected to submit a National Report on the current status for these benchmarks, the latest report gives an update through 2018.

Since 2010, the Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of the Netherlands, with the public entities Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius; and three autonomous countries, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. Collectively Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao Saba, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten are called the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands or the Dutch Caribbean.

Alarming Trends

This most recent report from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, released in April this year, states that although there has been some significant progress toward meeting the national targets, the 2020 deadline will not be fully met. For the Dutch Caribbean, the largest threats to reaching the Aichi Targets are amongst others overgrazing by free roaming feral livestock, invasive species,

overfishing, and pollution. These threats make island habitats less resilient to the major threat of climate change. The report also states that not enough is being done to deal with these local threats.

In total sixteen of the twenty Aichi targets are not on track for one or more of the Dutch Caribbean islands in achieving the 2020 targets. Additionally, a total of 13 targets are on progress but at an insufficient rate for some of the islands. Furthermore, it was found that, for the Dutch Caribbean islands, an alarming five of the Aichi Targets had a worsening trend, while no significant change was seen for 50% of the targets for some of the Dutch Caribbean islands. The five targets with a worsening trend on some or all of the Dutch Caribbean islands includes (5) loss of natural habitats, (7) sustainable agriculture, (12) reducing risk of extinction, (14) ecosystem services, (15) ecosystem restoration and resilience.

Successes

The report did highlight some successes for the Dutch Caribbean and four targets are currently on track to reach the 2020 targets for some of the islands. These Aichi targets are (1) awareness of biodiversity, (2) biodiversity values integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning, (8) pollution reduction and (17) establishing biodiversity strategies and action plans. The report reflects



A degraded Dutch Caribbean coral reef.
Photo by: © Erik Meesters (WUR)

positively on the public awareness campaigns across all of the Dutch Caribbean that stresses the importance of protecting nature, reducing pollution and encouraging sustainable use of resources. The other three targets are only on track to achieve the targets on the so-called BES-islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

In many cases, long-term monitoring data is lacking for many of the twenty Aichi Targets on each of the six Dutch Caribbean islands, therefore, the analysis completed was based on experts' judgments and the actual success varied significantly across the six Dutch Caribbean islands. Since 2010, the BES islands saw an overall increase in funding support and conservation actions, and therefore probably saw greater improvements when compared against Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, though clearly not enough.

Urgent call for support to all islands

The CBD report highlights both the successes and failures of current environmental policies and management practices in the Dutch Caribbean. The six Dutch Caribbean islands are a part of the larger Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot including many natural habitats including coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrass beds, tropical cloud and

rain forests, and caves all with a high level of biodiversity (number of plant and animal species). These islands are highly dependent on the health of these ecosystems both economically and socially. For all Dutch Caribbean islands to meet the Aichi Targets will not be possible without continued support from local conservation groups, public volunteers and governmental aid.

The Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA) is a non-profit foundation that works with dedicated nature management organizations on the six Dutch Caribbean islands to protect biodiversity and stimulate sustainable nature conservation efforts. Every island in the Dutch Caribbean has its own unique natural habitats but faces similar challenges to keep them protected. Climate change, deforestation, overfishing, sargassum influx events, rampant construction and the effects of unsustainable tourism are only a few examples. Collaboration and knowledge sharing is critical in maximizing the efficiency of these efforts.

The full report for the Kingdom of the Netherlands can be found here:
<https://www.dcbd.nl/document/sixth-national-report-kingdom-netherlands>























Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) between pencil-like roots of black mangrove
Photo by: © Marjolijn Lopes Cardozo

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The 20 Aichi Targets for the Dutch Caribbean

THE AICHI TARGETS:

																				
On track to exceed target																				
On track to achieve target	All	BON SAB EUX						BON SAB EUX									BON SAB EUX			
Progress towards target but at an insufficient rate		AUA SXM	AUA BON SAB EUX	BON SAB EUX		BON CUR SAB EUX SXM		AUA CUR SXM	All	All	All	BON SAB EUX	N/A			BON SAB EUX	SXM	N/A	BON CUR SAB EUX	BON SAB EUX
No significant change		CUR	CUR SXM	AUA CUR SXM		AUA						CUR SXM				AUA CUR SXM	AUA CUR		AUA SXM	AUA CUR SXM
Moving away from target					All		All					AUA		All	All					
Unknown																				

Key:

- 1. Public Awareness
- 2. Integrated biodiversity values
- 3. Removal of perverse incentives
- 4. Sustainable production/consumption
- 5. Loss of natural habitats
- 6. Sustainable Fisheries
- 7. Sustainable Agriculture
- 8. Pollution
- 9. Invasive Alien Species
- 10. Climate Change/Ocean Acidification
- 11. Protected Areas
- 12. Reducing risk of extinction
- 13. Genetic Diversity
- 14. Ecosystem Services
- 15. Ecosystem restoration and resilience
- 16. Nagoya ABS Protocol
- 17. NBSAP Revision
- 18. Traditional Environmental
- 19. Knowledge Transfer
- 20. Resource Mobilisation

AUA - Aruba
BON - Bonaire
CUR - Curaçao
SAB - Saba
EUX - Sint Eustatius
SXM - Sint Maarten
All - All Six Dutch Caribbean Islands
N/A - Not Applicable

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