



**SINT EUSTATIUS
CARIBISCH NEDERLAND**

To: Island Council Sint Eustatius
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Ref: 948/25

St. Eustatius, October 28th, 2025

Subject: **IC Motion 008-25**

Dear Members of the Island Council,

Introduction

Reference is made to the Island Council Motion with number 008-25, dated October 16th, 2025. This motion was adopted with 3 votes in favor of the motion and 1 vote against. Via this letter we would like to inform the Island Council that we have received the motion in good order. Please be advised that we have made an assessment of the legal and financial implications for the Public Entity Sint Eustatius regarding the consequences of carrying out the motion.

Taking into consideration the extensive consultation process of the food security program with the Island Council in May, August and September of this year, and also with the general public, whereby the Island Council was in all transparency presented with the full scope of the project plan and timeline and actions regarding the removal of the roaming animals on Sint Eustatius (live capture in urban/rural areas and culling only in Boven National Park), in combination with the immense financial and legal risks involved, the Executive Council has decided to not cancel the assignment contract with the invasive species specialists.

We wish to hereby provide you with our decision and explanation of how we got to that decision.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

1. Contents of the IC motion

- 1.1 On October 16th, the IC majority adopted a motion about the execution of the goat eradication program that is being carried out by the island government of St. Eustatius. The motion mentions in the one hand the outcry and concerns raised by the community about the importance of goats for food security, and in the other hand how the PLP has consistently emphasized food security, and efficiency, agriculture and animal husbandry as vital pillars of sustainable development and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, that the PLP wishes to ensure that the program execution is in line with governing principles, legal obligations on the national, international frameworks that protect cultural rights, animal welfare, and sustainable resource management. The IC resolves on the following four (4) points:
- 1.1.1 To instruct the BC to make available a comprehensive and transparent report on the goat eradication program, including scientific justification and reasons for excluding local hunters, qualifications of the hunters, cost of the program, and the chain of command responsible for this process.
- 1.1.2 To instruct the BC to immediately release the second Dutch training report confirming that the seven (7) local hunters were qualified, capable, and competent in carrying out the work.
- 1.1.3 To instruct the BC to provide a clear elucidation as to how the rapid engagement of Swedish Hunters and the eradication approach is aligned with the governing principles of the PLP, particularly concerning food security, animal husbandry, and cultural preservation.
- 1.1.4 To instruct the BC that the contract with the Swedish Hunters be halted immediately and terminated, as this does not reflect transparency, local inclusion, or adherence to the PLP core values and governing priorities.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

2. Sustainable Livestock Management: A Food security Approach

- 2.1 In March 2025, the Executive Council created the core project team for the food security approach to sustainable livestock management on Sint Eustatius consisting of Dr. Kimani Kitson – Walters, Dr. Sharon Veira and Mrs. Anna Maitz. Under instructions of the Executive Council, and more in particular the commissioner of Agriculture, Ms. Rechelline Leerdam, this core project team was instrumental in creating a draft project plan in March 2025.
- 2.2 Please be advised that this plan was never developed as a goat eradication plan, it is a plan for the enhancement of sustainable livestock management. The draft food security project, including the live capture component, culling component, assistance to livestock farmers and timeline was carefully drafted by Dr. Sharon Vieira, Dr. Kimani Kitson–Walters, and Mrs. Anna Maitz and submitted with their explicit approval and consent on all its contents to the Executive Council for approval and adoption. The final draft project was adopted by the Executive Council on 22 April 2025.
- 2.3 The draft sustainable livestock management program for food security was presented by the core project team to the Executive Council on March 11th, 2025. One of the main elements of the program is improving the way livestock are kept on the island, that is improving animal husbandry practices.
- 2.4 Based on the 2024 State of Nature Report of the Caribbean Netherlands, a comparison was made to the 2018 State of Nature Report. Overall, the terrestrial vegetations and habitats on Sint Eustatius have gotten worse, and the effects of free roaming animals is broad, while it is only a marginal source of income for a few farmers, while having a major collective social cost: uncontrolled erosion, loss of biodiversity, lowering groundwater levels, desertification, damage to coral reefs and fisheries, damage to agriculture, public nuisance, and traffic safety risks.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

- 2.5 Overall, in the 2024 State of Nature Report, the free roaming goats are qualified as not sustainable practice on Sint Eustatius in relation to food security. The argument made about roaming goats being a form of island self-sufficiency in food production is deemed nothing farther from the case, based on this report. The combined damage of excessive densities of roaming goats to soil and vegetation is clearly a major detriment to island food self-sufficiency. This is compounded by topsoil runoff, aridification lowering groundwater levels, resulting in poor soil quality, and fencing and continuous maintenance is required to keep goats away from crops, which is expensive for farmers.¹ This has a significant impact on food security.
- 2.6 Part of the food security program was that keeping goats roaming and not enclosed, considering their destructive nature, is not a sustainable way of animal husbandry as it is destructive to the land, it limits further agriculture usage of the lands, making it difficult to improve the quality of the animal products on the island and the quantity and quality of the local produce. Here, reference is also made to the state of nature report of 2024 of Sint Eustatius. Understanding that it is difficult for livestock farmers to keep their animals penned in, the program budgeted to provide the resources needed to assist them to do so. Livestock Farmers have been consulted, their needs assessed, materials purchased and on route to the island. This along with trainings conducted in June 2025 will provide farmers with the necessary tools to improve the quality of their livestock and subsequently food security. Providing this assistance took care of those roaming livestock that were owned and in the urban/rural areas.
- 2.7 For animals located in the Boven National Park that are feral, wild and unowned, three (3) scenarios were proposed to address their removal. The first scenario was goat culling and retrieval using only local hunters. The second scenario was goat culling and retrieval using a mixture of local hunters and foreign hunters. The third scenario was goat culling and retrieval using only foreign hunters. In all scenarios, culled animals would be retrieved for meat when safe to do so.

¹ See page 325 and 326 of the 2024 State of Nature Report of the Caribbean Netherlands.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

- 2.8 The project program also shows the timeline and costs involved with each scenario. Considering the timeline and costs involved, the Executive Council chose for option number two (2), that consisted of goat culling and retrieval using a mixture of local hunters, in combination with specific moments of foreign hunters.
- 2.9 On May 25th, 2025, the Island Council received a full presentation and copy of the food security program during a presentation session behind closed doors. The Island Council was given the room and the chance to provide input, ask critical questions, and voice concerns. Furthermore, the Island Council was presented also explicitly with the three (3) scenarios mentioned, and that the Executive council had chosen for scenario number two (2). All budgets, costs, legalities and underlying substantiation and how this is good for the island, further improving sustainable food security and responsible animal husbandry was presented and showed as well.
- 2.10 On August 27th, 2025, the core project team, consisting of Mr. Kimani Kitson – Walters, Mrs. Sharon Vieira, provided a presentation to the general public of our island during a townhall session, under the leadership of Commissioner Ms. Rechelline Leerdam. Also during this session, the community of Sint Eustatius received the full presentation of the food security program, along with the goat culling/retrieval, the timeline, and that there would be made use of a mixture of local hunters capacity and foreign hunters capacity to optimize the effective use of budget and to reach the goals of the project in a timely manner. The feedback from the public during and after this session was very positive and there was support for the presented plans.
- 2.11 On September 1st, 2025, the Island Council then finally received the same plan sustainable livestock management: a food security approach during the Central Committee meeting. This time, during a public session, the Island Council was given the opportunity to provide input, ask critical questions, and voice concerns.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

- 2.12 During this session, only the Island Council member Mr. Clyde van Putten remarked that he did not want any full scale eradication, which feedback was taking into account and therefore the goats are captured alive and only culled in the area Boven. No further critical feedback was given and all lights remained green.
- 2.13 As stated in the plan, local hunters would be used in the culling efforts. Seven (7) locals, some of which are livestock owners, underwent two training sessions. The first conducted in June 2025 was a 8-day training (theory and practical) meant to improve their shooting skills using higher caliber weapons as they had no experience with such weapons. Topics covered during this training included gun safety, maintenance and handling, BES legislation, shot placement and practice on the shooting range. During the training, shooting practice was limited to 8 hours max. This time was a divided amongst the participants with each having ~ 1.2hrs of practice on the shooting range. The second training took place in August 2025 where each local hunter was guided to hunt in the Boven National Park. Most hunters except for 2, participated in three (3) in-field sessions with each session lasting 4-5hrs. The 2 hunters participated in 1 and 2 sessions respectively. In total, each participant was exposed to ~16.2 hrs of practical training with the high caliber project weapons and the trainers. While the trainers did state that the local hunters could carry out the task, this is during the execution of a 5 year management plan which does not fall in line with the conditions/agreements set with the relevant Ministries.

3. Interconnected projects and programs

- 3.1 On June 6th, 2023, the Ministry of BZK provided a special purpose grant of nineteen million Euro (EUR 19,000,000.00). The purpose of this money is to stabilize the cliffside in the harbor and adjacent area. One of the conditions of the special purpose grant is that a goat free area will be created and enforced in and around the cliff area.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

- 3.2 Reference was made to the meeting on May 25th, 2023, between the Ministry of BZK, the complete Island Council of Sint Eustatius and the complete Executive Council of Sint Eustatius, in which both the Island Council and the Executive Council committed themselves to a zero-tolerance approach regarding the loose goats in the cliff area and Oranjestad as of June 1st, 2023. Instantly, upon this confirmation from both the Island Council and the Executive Council, the Ministry of BZK issued fifteen thousand Euro (EUR 15,000.00) for a communication plan regarding the zero-tolerance policy.
- 3.3 On December 5th, 2024, the Island Council of Sint Eustatius agreed to enter into an interest free loan agreement from the Ministry of BZK for a total amount of USD 4,200,000.00. This interest free loan was meant to settle the legal dispute between the Public Entity Sint Eustatius and the operators of EcoStatia N.V. and StatiaHousing N.V. located on the cliff and at the cliffside. One of the main conditions of the interest free loan is that the conditions of the special purpose grant in relation to the cliff stabilization project are met, namely the removal of the roaming goats.
- 3.4 On September 27th, 2025, the Ministry of BZK has provided the second installment of EUR 7,393,000.00 of the total sum of the special purpose grant of nineteen million Euro (EUR 19,000,000.00). The conditions of clearing the cliff area and Oranjestad area of roaming goats was reiterated in this letter from the Ministry of BZK.

4. Contractual and financial risks and liabilities

- 4.1 On June 25th, 2025 the contract with the invasive species specialist has been signed and a preparatory visit was organized in July. The total contracted sum is EUR 106,350, of which twenty-five percent (25%) was paid already. Based on the contract the Swedish Hunting Association is entitled to the next twenty-five percent (25%) upon first deployment, and the assignment contract does not include any specific termination options, apart from the regular general ARVODI terms (default, bankruptcy, force majeure).



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

- 4.2 The invasive species specialists have booked their flights and are arriving on November 17th, 2025, and the assignment contract and the start dates meet the timeline with the adopted food security program that was presented to the Island Council and adopted by the Executive Council. Furthermore, the plan was approved and supported by the NEPP Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of the Public Entity Sint Eustatius, the Ministries of BZK, LVVN and IenW. Considering there is no option to terminate, wrongful termination of the assignment contract will lead to a contractual claimed exposure of the full contracted sum of EUR 106,350.
- 4.3 The largest liability is the potential liability of the Public Entity Sint Eustatius of not meeting the conditions of the special purpose grant on June 6th, 2023 of EUR 19,000,000.00, followed by the re-commitment letter when the next payment tranche took place of September 25th, 2025. Based on this, not following the self-adopted commitments through the food security program and the earlier commitments made by both the Island Council and the Executive Council to the Ministries of the zero-tolerance policy, will lead to the obligation to pay back the subsidized full amount.
- 4.4 Another connected potential liability is the financial exposure that is there with the contractor for the cliff-stabilization project. Following the mediation of a potential dispute, the contractor was awarded the contract to complete the cliff-stabilization project, upon the receipt of the funds from the Ministry of BZK. Risking these funds through own actions, exposes the Public Entity Sint Eustatius also towards the contractor for potential liabilities. The value of this exposure is estimated between EUR 12,500,000.00 and EUR 13,500,000.00.
- 4.5 The third potential exposure that the Island Council and Executive Council should be mindful of is the exposure regarding the interest free loan agreement as entered into by the Island Council to settle the dispute in December 2024 with Ecostatia N.V. and



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

StatiaHousing N.V., for which the Public Entity of Sint Eustatius borrowed USD 4,200,00.00 from the Ministry of BZK.

- 4.6 On August 27th, 2025, the food security program was started and presented to the public. This created a general expectancy with the general public and people of Sint Eustatius that the roaming goats would be addressed as stipulated in the plan (live capture and culling) and that the Public Entity Sint Eustatius would execute the food security program. Adopting a program such as this and then presenting it to the public creates a legitimate expectation that the government will do what they say that they will do. Now pulling back from the adopted and presented plans will create distrust of the people of Sint Eustatius in the local government and exposes the Public Entity Sint Eustatius to litigation from the public with an obligation to enforce. Additionally, funds were reallocated from other budgets to ensure the execution of this plan. These funds may be recalled by the relevant Ministries due to the change in the project plan which was agreed on.

Conclusion and decision

Adding all potential financial exposure leads to a total liability of approximately USD 42,325,000.00. This is the combined total of the loss of contract sum, the obligated return of the special allowance grants, the liability risks with the contractor for the cliff-stabilization. This does not yet include the total amount of liability risk to the general public should they start an enforcement obligation case, and it does not yet include any legal costs involved.

Considering that the budget cannot carry this exposure, the Public Entity of Sint Eustatius would be effectively bankrupt.

Normally, when decentralized governments such as municipalities or water management public bodies or provinces go effectively bankrupt, the State level would invoke the legal instrument of higher supervision, and the State level would provide financial assistance.



SINT EUSTATIUS CARIBISCH NEDERLAND

Considering the Public Entities are already under a continuous form of higher supervision from the CFT and the Rijksvertegenwoordiger, this will lead to more involvement from those institutions.

Because the Statia Government just regained more local governance after a period of take-over and higher supervision, it is important to show that the Statia Government is a reliable and trustworthy government that follows-through on projects and programs that they adopt and present to the general public. Additionally, it is good to be seen as a reliable contract party with the different Ministries in the Netherlands.

However, most importantly, because the food security on Sint Eustatius and its sustainable development requires us also taking and sticking to the more difficult decisions, the Executive Council has decided to not terminate the assignment contracts with the invasive species specialists and continue as per the adopted food security program.

Executive Council Decision: Taking into consideration the extensive consultation process of the food security program with the Island Council, and also with the general public, whereby the Island Council was in all transparency presented with the full scope of the project plan and timeline and actions regarding the removal of the roaming animals on Sint Eustatius, in combination with the immense financial and legal risks involved, the Executive Council has decided to not cancel the assignment contract with the invasive species specialists.

To substantiate our decision, we hereby provide you also with the following documentation:

- Annex 1.** The 2024 State of Nature Report,
- Annex 2.** The food security program documentation, including the various reporting around it as per your request, and
- Annex 3.** The various letters regarding special purpose grants.

Trusting to have informed you sufficiently, we remain,



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Sincerely,

On behalf of the Executive Council,

