



**ILLEGAL LIVESTOCK FACILITIES WITHIN THE AREA OF «NATURA 2000»
NETWORK
«GKREMOI TOU HANOUTARI»
Executive Summary**



**AUDIT OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
SPECIAL REPORT no. ΠΕ/01/2020**

3 March 2020

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AUDITED ENTITIES

Ministry of Interior

Ministry of Agricultural, Rural Development and Environment

Department of Town Planning and Housing

Paphos District Administration

Department of Environment

Veterinary Services

Game and Fauna Service

Department of Forests

Executive Summary

Following the investigation of a complaint, dated 8.8.2016, communicated to our Office by a large number of bodies and non-governmental organizations (from which we received the photos included in this Report), regarding the illegal construction and operation of a livestock unit, which includes a store and a residence, in a farm belonging to a Holy Monastery, within the area of «Natura 2000» Network – «Gkremoi tou Hanoutari», we observed that illegal livestock facilities were developed in «Saouris» site of the above mentioned area, which hosts a large number of animals. Additionally, in the context of environmental audit, relevant environmental issues were also examined.

Our investigation revealed that, on 3.5.2015 an application (ΠΑΦ/00118/2015) for granting a town planning permit was submitted, for the development of livestock facilities, in a plot within the Special Protection Area (SPA) «Gkremoi tou



Hanoutari», adjacent to the SPA of «Paphos Forest» and near to the Site of Community Importance (SCI) «Koilada Kedron – Kampos», of «Natura 2000» Network. The plot falls within the town planning zone Z3-Protected Landscape (PL). For the development in the same plot, two applications had been previously submitted, one for developing a stockyard for sheep and goats and a residence and the other one for a residence development, which were both rejected.

The Department of Town Planning and Housing (DTPH), as the Town Planning Authority, after consulting the relevant Departments/Services (Paphos' District Officer, Water Development Department (WDD), Department of Environment (DE), Department of Forests (DF) and the Game and Fauna Service (GFS)), rejected the above mentioned application, on 24.8.2015, stating that there were important reasons, for which the proposed development should not have taken place in this area.

The applicant (Holy Monastery), after the rejection of the application by the DTPH, filed at the then Supreme Court (subsequently called Administrative Court) the appeal no. 1402/2015 which, on 4.12.2019, was rejected by the Court.

The most important audit findings are summarised below:

- ◆ We found that there is a weakness on behalf of the State (especially of the DTPH, the Veterinary Services (VS) and Paphos District Officer) to react timely and effectively to end a profound illegality.
- ◆ Although most of the involved Departments, especially those with the most significant role in the implementation of the relevant European legislation (DE, GFS), recognize the significance of the negative environmental impact from the operation of the above mentioned illegal livestock facilities, no effective measures were taken to end the illegality and restore the environment.

- ◆ It emerged that the different views of the DF, according to three different relevant letters, are contradictory to each other and raised questions and concerns about the reasons that led the Department, initially, to express strong views about the negative impact of the livestock facilities on the area's flora and fauna and two months later, in another letter, expressed the opinion that there are no consequences.
- ◆ The VS failed to expedite the prosecution of the owner, for operating an illegal livestock unit, despite the fact that the latter poses risks to public health, since no competent body controls neither its animal population, nor the distribution of its products to the market.
- ◆ The Council of Ministers, on 25.10.2017, decided to forward the application of the Holy Monastery to the Derogations Council, for reexamination, however, didn't state the reasons justifying this Decision, while we also noted an attempt, on behalf of the Council of Ministers, to suggest, to the competent Departments/Services, how to handle the application, probably in violation of the provisions of the General Principles of Administrative Law.

We called the attention of the competent Departments/Services, in order to secure the legality, to proceed, without any delay, to the demolition of the illegal livestock facilities and take measures for the restoration of the natural environment, within the area of «Natura 2000» Network.