

Audit on the Fulfillment of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention)

The Portuguese Court of Auditors conducted an audit aiming to assess the accomplishment of the commitments undertaken by Portugal within the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), to evaluate the management of the resources allocated to wetlands protection and conservation and the results obtained under an environmental standpoint.

The audit concluded that the existing legal framework, although there is no specific legal framework or even the legal definitions for the concepts of wetland and sustainable use of wetlands, provide adequate protection. Wetlands listed as Ramsar sites enjoy the status of protected areas and are mostly also included in the Natura 2000 network.

The ecological conditions of listed wetlands are satisfactory and only occasionally have threats to their sustainability been identified. The bird counts conducted in the most important wetlands and the counts carried out under the Common Birds Census haven't shown significant fluctuations of populations of species of resident, wintering and passage migrant birds sheltered there. Findings include the improvement of water quality, particularly in estuarine areas. Relevant threats identified were the proliferation of invasive species such as water hyacinth and Louisiana crawfish. Threats from biotechnology or biopiracy weren't noted.

It wasn't developed any systematic study on the foreseen impacts that climate change will have on wetland ecosystems, nor performed any valuation analysis of the benefits provided by the services arising from that ecosystems existence and preservation.

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