

Focus on strategic stocks

The Netherlands Court of Audit has investigated the government's strategic stocks and their availability during an emergency. The government keeps operational and strategic stocks of petroleum, medicines, medical aids and cash money. It does not keep strategic stocks of gas or food. Furthermore, little progress has been made with the designation of national groundwater reserves.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have shown that strategic stocks are not an unnecessary luxury. It is reassuring to have something in reserve in case supply is disrupted or if there is another unexpected event. The government keeps stocks of energy (oil and gas) and water, both to implement its own policies and to comply with EU directives and regulations.

Why did we carry out this investigation?

It is important to have an insight into the status of strategic stocks, the policy implemented for them and the risk to the Netherlands of its reliance on certain countries. For a long time, it was thought that the Groningen gas field represented an adequate gas buffer but this is no longer the case as the field is nearing depletion. Our investigation provides an insight into what is well-regulated and what is not.

What questions did the investigation ask?

The investigation asked what strategic stocks are, whether the government had formed strategic stocks and whether or not they were filled. It also looked at the policy in place for them and asked what strategic stocks had not been formed and why not.

Focus investigation

The investigation of strategic stocks was a focus investigation, a method to share insights more quickly by means of a short, factual and readable report with a clear problem definition and without opinions and recommendations. By looking at the bigger picture, a focus investigation takes less time than the Court's customary audits.