

Simpo ŠIK is engaged in the production of hardboard, plywood, parquet and solid wood. It is located along the bank of the Banjska river, which soon flows into Toplica.

Due to the suspicion that in August 2019, from Kursumlija's Simpo ŠIK, daughters of the company Simpa from Vranje, wastewater was released and the survival of fish in the river Toplica was endangered, against this company and its acting director. The director is currently in court, CINS has learned. The company has already been convicted twice for water pollution and paid almost two million dinars. Fines are effective only if the fines are high enough that the pollution does not recur, but that is often not the case with us, experts believe.

A possible cause of the unpleasant smell and death of the fish was the discharge of wastewater into the river.

As the Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS) reveals, the inspection of the Ministry of Environmental Protection suspects the Kursumlija plant, Simpo ŠIK, a subsidiary of the furniture factory Simpo from Vranje, of this. Due to the suspicion that the discharge of water endangered the health, life and survival of the fish in the river, in October 2019, the inspection filed a report for economic crime against this company and its acting director Milorad Andrejević to the public prosecutor's office. The trial is underway in the Commercial Court in Nis, and the hearing is scheduled for the beginning of March. The Law on Protection and Sustainable Use of Fish Stock, which, according to the inspection, was violated in this case, states that the pollution of fishing water with harmful and dangerous substances is prohibited. If the court finds that the plant has violated the law, a fine of up to three million dinars is threatened.

Fines can solve the problem only if they are high enough, so that the polluter does not pay to pollute the environment, biologist Miroslav Nikčević believes.

The Banjska river was polluted that August, the Nis Institute for Public Health determined. The examination showed that the concentrations of ammonium ions, sulfides, phenols, manganese and iron were increased in the water, as well as the reduced values of oxygen. The analysis also determined that there was an increase in the concentration of arsenic, ammonium ions and orthophosphate in the Toplica River.

If heavy metals are released, it can be harmful for the future, Nikčević explains, since they are deposited and can poison the living world for a long time.

Simpo ŠIK has already been convicted twice for river pollution

This is not the first time that the Kursumlija plant has been brought to court due to the discharge of wastewater and endangering fish, according to documents that CINS had

access to.

The first procedure was conducted at the beginning of the factory, in 2011 when inspectors of the Ministry of Environmental Protection (old name: Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning) during an extraordinary inspection determined that the company did not examine the quality of wastewater before and after treatment according to regulations, although she had to. Inspectors also determined that even after the purification, the quality of the water that was discharged into the Banjska River was poor, which could have endangered the survival of the fish. During the trial, the defendants stated that they monitored the quality of water before discharge into the river, as well as that the concentration of wastewater before discharge into the river was in accordance with the prescribed values. However, the court could not accept these allegations because, as stated in the verdict, they were not made by an authorized person, and the data are contrary to the analysis of the Nis Institute of Public Health. The Commercial Court in Nis made a decision that the plant and the director, as the responsible person, are obliged to pay a fine - 400 thousand dinars was the fine for Simpo ŠIK, while the then director had to pay ten times less, ie 40 thousand dinars.

The following year, a similar situation occurred: the Ministry (then the Ministry of Natural Resources, Mining and Spatial Planning) again noticed that there was a discharge of wastewater into the Banjska River and the death of fish. The defendants, as the first time, denied guilt. The verdict, which CINS had access to, states that they are not the only polluters, and that it cannot be determined that they are responsible for the death of the fish. The court accepted the allegations that there are other pollutants, but that does not exclude the fact that Simpo ŠIK, as stated in the verdict, also released harmful substances in illegal quantities. The Commercial Court in Nis determined that the company was responsible for releasing harmful substances and thus endangered the survival of the fish. This time, the fine was higher - Simpo ŠIK was sentenced to a fine of 1.5 million dinars, while the then director was obliged to pay 100 thousand dinars.

Discharge of wastewater and endangering the survival of fish in the river Toplica is a recurring problem, says fish keeper Dragan Mijajlović, and he believes that it will exist until a water purification factory is built. During previous trials, Simpo SHIK stated that their water purification plant is working, but that, according to the data of the Nis Institute for Public Health, is not enough. The court twice determined that the river was excessively polluted. There is currently no water purification plant in Kursumlija, but this investment has been announced for the next period. At the end of 2020, the president of the municipality of Kursumlija, Radoljub Vidic, said that a feasibility study was being prepared.



Serbian company Simpo ŠIK in court again due to fish extermination

Source: cins.rs