



SPECIES SURVIVAL NETWORK

Criteria for Assessing the Sustainability of Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora

The Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) have recognized, in Articles III and IV, that international commercial trade in plants and animals must not be detrimental to the survival of species, or in other words, that it must be sustainable. Too often, use of a species is claimed to be sustainable in the absence of evidence to support this claim. Such evidence should be provided by those who wish to label a use "sustainable". The following criteria have been developed to assist Parties when assessing the sustainability of trade in wild fauna and flora. The criteria may be adapted and applied when assessing the sustainability of other types of uses. Proposals to remove or reduce the level of protection afforded, or to start or increase international commercial trade in, a species should meet these criteria.

1. INFORMATION IS COLLECTED

Sufficient information is collected on the population of a species used, and on the social and economic factors affecting it, to permit a conclusion that the level of use is not detrimental to the long-term survival of the species throughout its range, or detrimental to its habitat or ecosystem, and that this level of use produces conservation benefits sufficient to justify the use.

Valid scientific information is needed on: a) the size, structure, dynamics, status and trend of the population (such as recruitment, natural and human caused mortality, immigration, emigration, mating system, age structure, age distribution, sex ratio, density, growth rates, age to sexual maturity, dispersal and ranging behavior, disease, genetic composition); b) the status and trend of habitats or other ecosystem components is necessary for the survival of the population; c) the relationship between the population and associated species and communities (such as predators, prey, seed dispensers, pollinators, competitors, etc); and d) abiotic factors (such as pollution and climate) that might influence the status and trend of the species or supporting ecosystem. Information is needed on the types and levels of past, current, and projected use, and the social, cultural, political and economic factors affecting or likely to affect use.

2. A SCIENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IS IN PLACE

A science-based management system is developed and implemented to ensure that use of a species is not, and will not become in the future, detrimental to populations or species or their habitats and ecosystems.

The management system adapts and adjusts in response to biological changes in the population of a species, or type or level of use of the population, or its habitat or supporting ecosystem. Such a system requires continued monitoring of the effect of use, both legal and illegal, on the managed population or species and its habitat and ecosystem. The management system: a) is based on a management plan that summarizes the basic information on which management is established, sets out the steps by which the effect of use on the population or species and its habitat and ecosystem are monitored, details how use types and levels are adjusted based on the monitoring, and describes how uses are regulated; b) manages biological populations as a whole, including cooperative management of populations straddling international borders; c) addresses the cultural, social, political or economic factors that affect use; d) ensures that markets are not stimulated beyond the limits of the population; e) develops a mechanism by which use will be terminated if it becomes detrimental to the survival of the population; and f) ensures independent monitoring and access to scientific information on which management is based.

3. THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE IS APPLIED

The precautionary principle is rigorously applied in order to reduce the risk of harm to populations or species and their habitats and ecosystems.

The precautionary principle has been adopted in many international agreements, including CITES, which in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Criteria for Amendment of Appendices I and II) defines the term as follows: "Scientific uncertainty should not be used as a reason for failing to act in the best interest of the conservation of the species." Application of the precautionary principle includes a mechanism for rapidly scaling back or stopping the use if necessary to avoid harm to wild populations or species and their habitats and ecosystems.

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2100 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20037 USA Tel: +1 301-548-7769 Fax: +1-202-318-0891
Email: info@ssn.org Website: www.ssn.org

*CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora



4. GOVERNMENT POLICIES, LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS ARE IN PLACE

Government policies, laws and institutions are adopted and enforced to ensure that use of a species is not, and will not become in the future, detrimental to wild populations or species and their habitats and ecosystems.

Laws are enacted to establish appropriate user fees and management payments that can be used to ensure proper enforcement and implementation of laws and regulations. State and local conservation and other agencies are established, trained, and equipped to enforce applicable statutes and regulations. Administrative and criminal sanctions are established and enforced to deter and punish illegal uses such as poaching and smuggling. A wild population of a species whose range crosses or straddles international borders is subject to a management agreement between the countries concerned. International agreements are adhered to and implemented. Activities within a State's jurisdiction or control do not impair the viability of wild species in another State or in other areas of international jurisdiction or control do not impair the viability of wild species in another State or in other areas of international jurisdiction. Species are protected from avoidable negative impacts of military activities.

5. PEOPLE LIVING IN THE VICINITY OF THE USED POPULATION ARE EMPOWERED AND EXPERIENCE BENEFITS

Economic benefits from the use are directed equably among those involved in the use including people living in the vicinity of the used population ("local people"). Such benefits reduce the detrimental impact of such people on the survival of the population or species and its habitat and ecosystem. Governments involve local people in decisions affecting the use while continuing to base management decisions on science. Local people agree to make adjustments to current uses, and take other actions as necessary to ensure successful implementation of the management plan.

6. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IS DEMONSTRATED

All costs associated with the proposed use are carefully calculated or projected. Such costs include those associated with biological monitoring, management and enforcement needed to ensure that the use is not, and will not become in future, detrimental to wild populations or species and their habitats and ecosystems. Fees and taxes or other means exist to ensure that these costs are borne by those profiting from the use.

7. LONG-TERM CONSERVATION BENEFITS ARE DEMONSTRATED

The use provides demonstrable long-term conservation benefits to the wild population or species (such as increased anti-poaching efforts) and its habitat and ecosystem (such as protection of critical habitat) and ensures the recovery of depleted populations. Proposals for new uses should demonstrate significantly greater conservation benefits than those provided by the existing conservation regime.

8. THE USE IS COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER USES OF THE SPECIES AND IS NOT DETRIMENTAL TO OTHER SPECIES

The use of a species is compatible with other uses of the species and is not detrimental to other populations or species and their habitats and ecosystems.

9. ANIMALS ARE PROTECTED FROM CRUELTY AND SUFFERING, AND INCIDENTAL MORTALITY IS AVOIDED

Animals are protected from cruelty and suffering. Incidental mortality of animals or plants of the species subject to use or other species (such as mortality caused by the use of unselective collection techniques or by the mistreatment of live specimens in capture, holding, transport or shipping) is avoided. Collection of scientific information is non-lethal unless otherwise unattainable. The welfare status of the animals used (such as the conditions under which they are captured, held, transported, killed) is recorded, assessed, and monitored.

These Criteria were prepared in August 1996 by the Wildlife Use Working Group of the Species Survival Network, an international coalition of organizations committed to the promotion, enhancement, and strict enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna Flora (CITES). The following organizations are members of the Working Group and endorse these Criteria: Animal Welfare Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Investigation Agency, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Society International, Humane Society International-Australia, International Wildlife Coalition, Wildlife Conservation Philosophy Specialist Group of Japan, Mountain Gorilla and Rainforest Direct Aid, IUCN Turtle Specialist Group, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Tusk Force.

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