

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Thirty-second meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 19 – 23 June 2023

Species conservation and trade

SAIGA ANTELOPES (SAIGA SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.213 to 19.217 on *Saiga antelope* (*Saiga spp.*) as follows:

Directed to range States of saiga antelope (Saiga spp.) (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives

- 19.213** a) *The range States of the saiga antelope (Saiga spp.) and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, as identified by the Secretariat on the basis of CITES trade data, should fully implement the measures directed to them in the Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope for 2021-2025 [MTIWP (2021-2025)], developed in support of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (Saiga spp.) and its Saiga Action Plan; and*
- b) *Consistent with the measures directed to saiga range States in MTIWP (2021-2025), the range States of the saiga antelope are encouraged to establish internal market controls for saiga parts, including registration of stockpiles, labelling of parts and products, and registration of manufacturers and traders, and report such information to the CITES Secretariat.*

Directed to the Secretariat

19.214 *Subject to the availability of external resources, the Secretariat shall:*

- a) *review, in consultation with the CMS Secretariat, the conservation of and trade in saiga antelope, Saiga spp., based on available data on legal and illegal trade, materials and outcomes of the fourth meeting of Saiga MOU signatories, and stakeholder consultations, and report any consequent findings and recommendations to the Animals Committee, and to the Standing Committee in the context of the implementation of Resolution Conf. 13.3 on Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the Joint CMS-CITES work programme;*
- b) *consult saiga range States and major trading and consumer States concerning their management of stockpiles of saiga specimens; review processes and practices; and provide assistance in ensuring effective stockpile management and monitoring, including the development of inventories and strengthening stockpile security;*
- c) *provide training to strengthen cross-border cooperation in CITES implementation, identification of saiga products and techniques for countering illegal trade; and*

- d) report to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee on the implementation of this Decision, as appropriate.

Directed to the Animals Committee

- 19.215** The Animals Committee shall, as appropriate, consider any findings and recommendations submitted by the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.214, and make recommendations to the Standing Committee.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 19.216** The Standing Committee shall, as appropriate, consider any findings and recommendations submitted by the Animals Committee and the Secretariat in accordance with Decisions 19.214 and 19.215, and make recommendations as necessary.

Directed to saiga antelope range States, Parties, multilateral environmental agreements, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders

- 19.217** Saiga antelope range States, Parties, multilateral environmental agreements, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate in the conservation and restoration of the saiga antelope (*Saiga spp.*), and to support the implementation of MTIWP (2021-2025) as well as the technical coordination of the Saiga MOU.

Implementation of Decision 19.214

Paragraph a)

3. The Russian Federation hosted the 4th meeting of the signatories of the *Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (Saiga spp.)* [MOS4] online from 28 to 29 September 2021 with the support of the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).
4. The CITES Secretariat assisted the CMS Secretariat in reporting to MOS4, which, *inter alia*, reviewed progress in the implementation by the range States of the *Saiga Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (Saiga spp.)* (Saiga MOU); agreed on the *Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope for 2021-2025 [MTIWP (2021-2025)]*¹; and endorsed a feasibility study on the sustainable use of saiga antelopes entitled “The Sustainable Use of Saiga Antelopes: Perspectives and Prospects”².
5. MOS4 considered an overview report on the conservation status of saiga antelopes and the implementation of the Saiga MOU, based on National Reports and Project Reports submitted to the CMS Secretariat by signatory range States up until August 2021³. A summary of key features regarding the updated conservation status of saiga antelopes was presented at the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC74, Lyon, March 2022) in document [SC74 Doc. 78](#) and presented below:
6. It was reported at MOS4 that the best estimation of the global saiga antelope population in 2021 was a minimum of 860,600 animals and the saiga population numbers at the country level were as follows:
 - a) *S. tatarica*: around 10,000 in the Russian Federation and increasing; around 842,000 in Kazakhstan and increasing; 150-200 in Uzbekistan and declining; no saiga antelopes have been observed in Turkmenistan for the last 20 years.
 - b) *S. borealis*: minimum of 5,070 in Mongolia and increasing.
7. The status of saiga antelopes varies between populations and countries. Between 2015 and 2021, the four *S. tatarica* populations (Pre-Caspian, Ural, Ustyurt and Betpak-dala) reportedly showed consistent

¹ https://www.cms.int/saiga/sites/default/files/document/unep-cms_saiga_mos4_outcome1_mtiwp-2021-2025_e_0.pdf

² <https://www.cms.int/saiga/en/document/sustainable-use-saiga-antelopes-perspectives-and-prospects-0>

³ https://www.cms.int/saiga/sites/default/files/document/unep-cms_saiga_mos4_doc.5_rev.2_overview-report-on-conservation-status-and-mou-implementation_e.pdf

increases. The populations in Kazakhstan increased tenfold since 2015. The Ural population, shared between Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, has surpassed its historical maximum in 2021. The Ustyurt population in Kazakhstan is increasing, but the small population in Uzbekistan is highly threatened because the southward migration from Kazakhstan is curtailed by linear infrastructure barriers. The global population of *S. tatarica*, although not yet recovered to the levels of the 1980s and 1990s, has increased substantially since the Third Meeting of Signatories (MOS3) in 2015.

8. The total numbers of saiga antelopes must be estimated with caution as the extensive area of distribution, large differences between seasonal ranges, nomadic behavior, and natural population fluctuations make accurate population estimates of saiga antelopes difficult and obscure population trends. For wide-ranging ungulates such as the saiga, even well-conducted counts are likely to be underestimates, and the degree of underestimation increases as population gets smaller and more fragmented, because the animals are harder to detect.
9. Despite growing population numbers, saiga antelopes remain vulnerable to poaching, climate change, impacts of old and new infrastructure and disease outbreaks, exacerbated by the influence of climate change. As illustrated by mass die-offs in the Ural population (2010; estimated mortality 12,000 animals), the Betpak-Dala population (2015; estimated mortality >200,000 animals or 88% of the population), and Mongolia (2016-17; estimated mortality ~5,000 animals or 54% of the population), underlying trends of population recovery can be reversed very quickly in these species.

Conservation achievements

10. The national range States' reports and other available information that were presented at MOS4 demonstrate several important conservation achievements since 2015:
 - a) Saiga antelopes have generally increased in abundance across their range; and their status and conservation needs are generally well understood at international and national levels.
 - b) A range of conservation interventions have been implemented in all range States by governmental and non-governmental organizations, covering all priorities in the MTIWP 2016-2020.
 - c) The Saiga MOU brings stakeholders together and allows for new planning, reporting on activities, and sharing news and technical expertise (for example on public awareness-raising, education, law enforcement, population monitoring, and disease surveillance).
 - d) There have been arrests and successful prosecutions of poachers and illegal traders in some range States. Overall, it appears that poaching levels have declined.
 - e) Several range States have created, expanded or redesignated protected areas and landscape-scale initiatives to enhance the conservation of saiga antelopes.

Conservation challenges and threats

11. MOS4 identified several conservation challenges and threats, recognizing that saiga antelopes were perceived as less acutely threatened than in 2015, but also expressing growing concerns about the impacts of climate change and barriers to migration:
 - a) The saiga antelope populations in Mongolia, North-West Pre-Caspian and Ustyurt, particularly in Uzbekistan, remain low.
 - b) Linear infrastructure (railways, roads, pipelines and a border fence) are impacting three *S. tatarica* populations, particularly Ustyurt and Betpak-dala, and this will worsen by impending infrastructure projects unless mitigation measures are implemented, such as rerouting where necessary.
 - c) Poaching for meat or horns remain a problem throughout the range, suggesting the need to further improve the effectiveness of anti-poaching efforts.
 - d) Demand for saiga products in consumer countries is still high; illegal trade continues; stockpiles are unmonitored and limited action is taken to curb illegal trade outside the range States.

- e) Diseases and mass die-offs remain a concern. As further outbreaks are likely, more proactive monitoring and controls are required, particularly at the wildlife/livestock interface. Large and resilient saiga populations are needed, for example through reducing barriers to migration.
- f) Resentment of saigas by local livestock herders because of increasing competition for grazing and water and suspected disease transmission to livestock is a threat in Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Russian Federation. While saiga populations are recovering, livestock is expanding and human impacts on saiga habitat are increasing (e.g., through infrastructure and agriculture development). It is expected that negative interactions with humans will become more frequent and incentives for local communities to coexist with saigas need to be developed.
- g) The impacts of climate change on saigas are still poorly understood but likely to include habitat changes that may increase competition for water and pasture resources; greater susceptibility to diseases; mortality caused by extreme weather conditions; and shifting migration patterns.
- h) Continued resources and financial support from national authorities and international donors are required for the implementation of priority actions under the MTIWP 2021-2025.

Legal trade in saiga specimens

- 12. *Saiga tatarica* and *S. borealis* have been included in CITES Appendix II since 1995. At CoP18, it was agreed to amend the listing of both species in Appendix II by adding the following annotation: “A zero export quota for wild specimens traded for commercial purposes”. The annotation applies to exports of saiga specimens of wild origin for commercial purposes taking place under the provisions of Article IV, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Convention. It does not apply to re-exports of specimens of *Saiga* spp. under the provisions of Article IV, paragraphs 4 and 5, which can continue for commercial or non-commercial purposes.
- 13. At SC74, the Secretariat provided an overview of the legal trade in saiga specimens between 2007 to 2019 as recorded in the CITES Trade Database ([SC74 Doc. 78 Annex 3](#); attached as an Annex to the present document). Since the data was downloaded in September 2021, only 21 additional records of *Saiga* spp. transactions were recorded in the CITES Trade Database (data downloaded on 13 April 2023).
- 14. These 21 additional records were of *S. tatarica* and consisted for 8 direct trade records and 13 re-export records. The trade transactions consisted of 7 records of horns, 13 records of medicine and 1 record of specimens.
- 15. The breakdown of the term, source and purpose codes of these trade transactions are shown below with the total number of records:

Term	Source code	Purpose	Total records
Horns	I	P	1
Horns	I	T	1
Horns	O	T	2
Horns	U	M	1
Horns	W	T	2
Medicine	I	P	4
Medicine	I	T	1
Medicine	O	T	8
Specimens	C	T	1

- 16. The two records of wild specimens (source code “W”) of horns traded for commercial purpose (purpose code “T”) were re-exports from Singapore to Japan with Kazakhstan as origin. The total amount of horn re-exported were 541 kg (376 kg in 2020 and 165 kg in 2021 reported by both importer and exporter).
- 17. The two records of pre-convention specimens (source code “O”) of horn traded for commercial purpose (purpose code “T”) were 1,000 kg re-exported from Singapore to Hong Kong SAR with the Russian Federation as origin and 200 kg re-exported from Hong Kong SAR to Japan with an unknown origin (code “XX”) reported by both importers and exporters in 2020.

18. Three trade records of direct trade of horn were only reported by the importer and included one seized specimen each exported for commercial (purpose code "T") and personal (purpose code "P") purposes in 2019 and 600 kg of unknown origin (source code "U") horns being exported from Ukraine to China for medical purpose (purpose code "M") in 2021.

Paragraph b) and c)

19. The Secretariat received a request of support from the government of Kazakhstan with regards to the issue of stockpiles and human wildlife conflict with saigas due to the increase in the saiga population. In 2022, Kazakhstan reported a total of 1.3 million saiga antelopes, a large increase from the reported 842,000 in 2021.
20. In the context of the implementation of Resolution Conf. 13.3 on *Cooperation and synergy with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)* and the Joint CMS-CITES work programme, the Secretariat participated virtually in the first half of the workshop *Identifying solutions to human-wildlife conflict involving Saiga Antelopes in Kazakhstan* hosted by the CMS Secretariat on 28 February – 1 March 2023 to provide information on the implementation of CITES for saiga specimens and on stockpile management.
21. The second half of the workshop is a consultative meeting on *Identifying solutions to human-wildlife conflict involving saiga antelopes in Kazakhstan* to be held on 25-27 May in Astana, Kazakhstan. The expected outcome of the workshop is a *Strategy for saiga population management in Kazakhstan*. The Secretariat will report on any updates from the workshop as it relates to CITES to the Animals Committee at this present meeting.
22. The Secretariat is in dialogue with a donor over funding for a review of saiga stockpile management envisaged under paragraph b) of Decision 19.214, which includes conducting a review of existing stockpile management practices; compiling good practices; and providing assistance in ensuring effective stockpile management and monitoring in range States, including the development of inventories and strengthening stockpile security.

Recommendations

23. The Animals Committee is invited to:
 - a) take note of document AC32 Doc. 35 and any updates from the Secretariat; and
 - b) based on the available information and, as appropriate, oral updates, consider making recommendations to the Standing Committee.

OVERVIEW OF TRADE IN SPECIMENS OF SAIGA SPP. 2007 – 2019

This analysis by the CITES Secretariat is based on the aggregate trade data downloaded from the CITES Trade Database on 13.09.2021. It provides an update of the trade data analysis presented in [Annex 2 to Document SC70 Doc. 58](#).

Saiga borealis

The majority of the trade in Saiga parts and derivatives between 2007 and 2019 were comprised of *Saiga tatarica* and only six records (nine shipments) of *S. borealis* were recorded. The trade in *S. borealis* comprised of low levels of seized/confiscated (source code I) derivatives and medicine in 2010 and 2017 for personal purposes and two shipments of hair and skin pieces reported from wild (source code W) and no identified source for scientific purposes in 2014. The last recorded trade of *S. borealis* was in 2018 with 84 specimens from the wild exported for medical (including biomedical research) purposes.

Table 1. Trade in *Saiga borealis* recorded in the CITES trade database 2007-2019 shown as aggregate records

Year	Importer	Exporter	Importer reported quantity	Exporter reported quantity	Term	Unit	Purpose	Source
2010	NZ	CN	110		derivatives	g	P	I
2010	NZ	CN	21		derivatives		P	I
2014	US	MN		39	hair		S	W
2014	US	MN		73	skin pieces		S	
2017	US	VN	3		medicine		P	I
2018	GB	MN	84		specimens		M	W

Saiga tatarica

Between 2007 and 2019, 401 records (2,294 shipments) of *S. tatarica* parts and derivatives were recorded in the CITES database of which 217 records (1,165 shipments) show trade recorded by weight (grams or kilograms).

The number of trade records for each source code is summarized in Table 2. The definitions of source codes are as follows:

- W: Specimens taken from the wild
- X: Specimens taken in "the marine environment not under the jurisdiction of any State"
- C: Animals bred in captivity in accordance with Resolution Conf. 10.16 (Rev.), as well as parts and derivatives thereof, exported under the provisions of Article VII, paragraph 5
- F: Animals born in captivity (F1 or subsequent generations) that do not fulfil the definition of 'bred in captivity' in Resolution Conf. 10.16 (Rev.), as well as parts and derivatives thereof
- U: Source unknown (must be justified)
- I: Confiscated or seized specimens
- O: Pre-Convention specimens

Table 2. Trade records of *Saiga tatarica* based on aggregated records in the CITES trade database 2007-2019 including direct trade and re-exports.

Source	Total number of records	Total number of records by weight
C	13	1
F	2	0
I	172	32
O	91	86
U	5	4
W	105	84
blank	13	10

Total	401	217
-------	-----	-----

Trade in Saiga tatarica by weight

The trade by weight analysis excluded source code 'I' as it is not reported consistently by Parties and only direct trade was considered, unless specifically mentioned.

A total of 217 trade records of *S. tatarica* were reported by weight (either in kg or g), of which 185 records were of a source code that is not 'I'. The main terms in trade reported by weight were horns, derivatives, and medicine from wild (W), pre-Convention (O) or unknown (U) sources.

There is a generally low volume of direct trade reported between 2010 and 2018. Based on exporter reported data, this consisted of derivatives [109 kg in 2010, 17.1 kg in 2011 and 11.7 kg in 2012] and an annual average of 294 kg of horn and 254.5 kg of medicines. Importer reported data for the same period shows trade in 12.2 kg of derivatives in 2010 and 139 kg in 2011, and an annual average of 223 kg of horn and 136 kg of medicine.

In 2019, 1,494 kg of horn was exported from Ukraine to China of pre-convention and unknown origins (Figure 1) and 3,135 kg of horn was re-exported from Singapore to Hong Kong (origin Kazakhstan) of wild origin (Table 3).

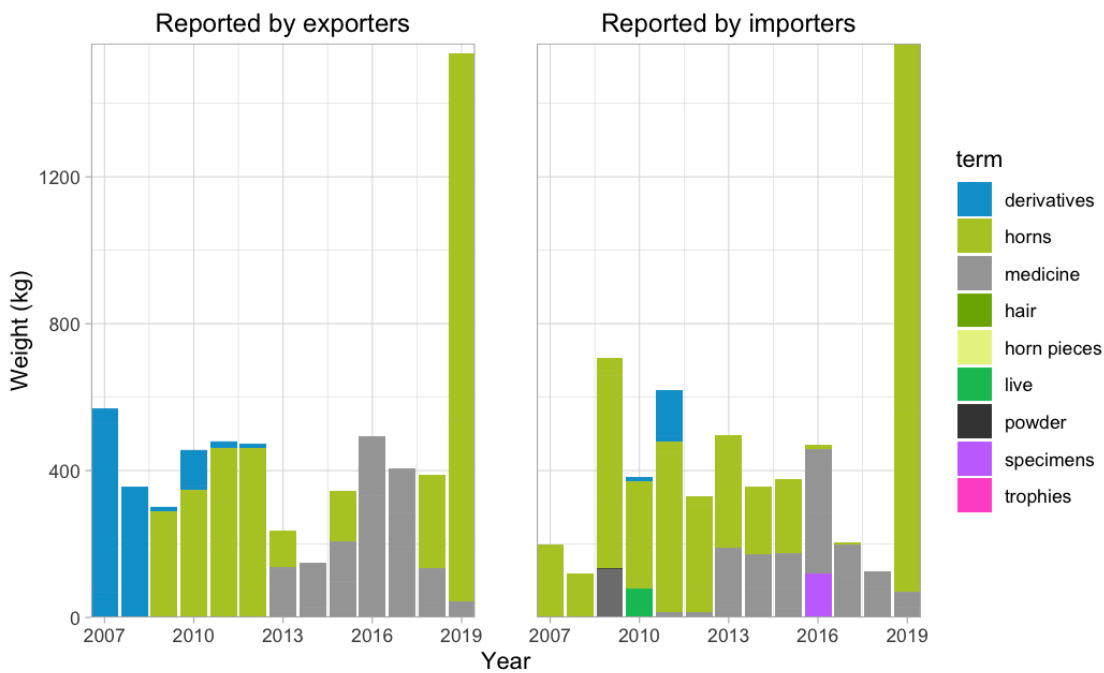


Figure 1: Direct trade in *S. tatarica* parts and derivatives shown by term, reported by weight, 2007-2019, all sources excluding source 'I', all purposes, reported by a) exporters and b) importers.

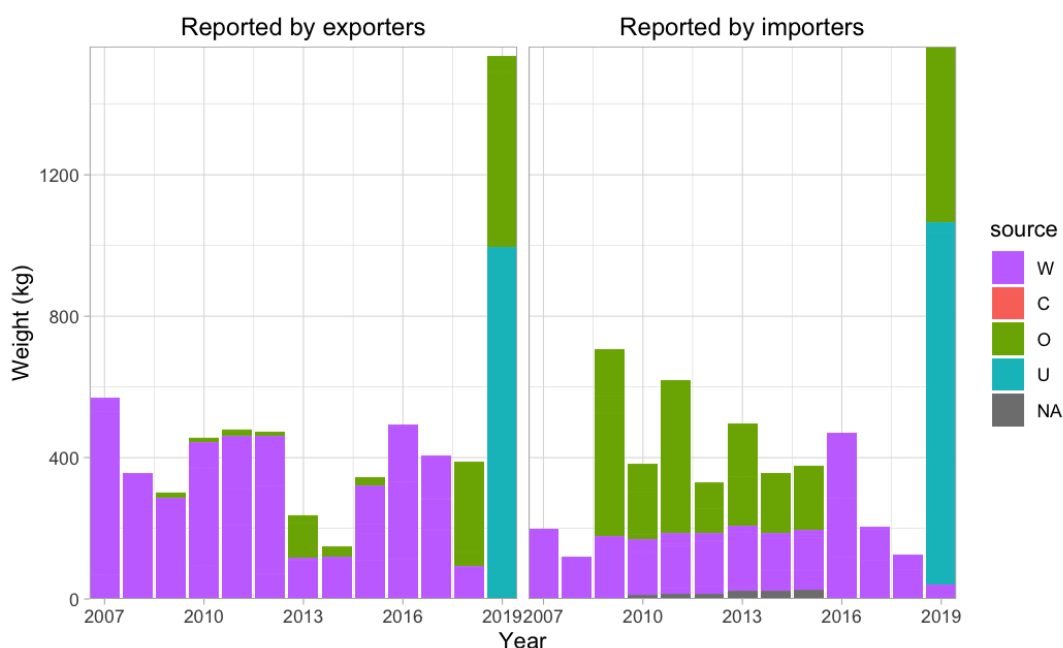


Figure 2: Direct trade in *S. tatarica* parts and derivatives shown by source code, reported by weight, 2007-2019, all sources excluding source 'I', all purposes, reported by a) exporters and b) importers.

Table 3. Export and re-export of horn of Saiga tatarica in 2019.

Year	Importer	Exporter	Origin	Importer reported quantity	Exporter reported quantity	Term	Unit	Purpose	Source	Extra information
2019	CN	UA		498	498	horns	kg	T	O	Source reported as "O/U" by CN and as "U (O)" by UA. This was changed to "O" in accordance with the annual report processing protocol.
2019	CN	UA		996	996	horns	kg	T	U	
2019	HK	SG	KZ	3135	3135	horns	kg	T	W	

According to exporter-reported data, the main direct exporter of trade reported by weight between 2007 and 2019 was China followed by Ukraine and Japan. Japan was the main importing country of direct trade in *S. tatarica* reported by weight followed by China (Table 4).

Table 4. Main exporters and importers of *S. tatarica* reported by weight between 2007 and 2019. Total weight and percentage of total trade as reported by exporters and importers.

Main exporters		Main importers	
Reported by exporters	Reported by importers	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers
CN (4132 kg, 66.72%)	CN (2275 kg, 38.24%)	JP (3221 kg, 52.02%)	JP (3733 kg, 62.75%)
UA (1494 kg, 24.12%)	UA (1494 kg, 25.11%)	CN (1497 kg, 24.17%)	CN (1497 kg, 25.16%)
JP (312 kg, 5.04%)	HK SAR (1293 kg, 21.73%)	SG (790 kg, 12.76%)	MY (257 kg, 4.32%)
SG (255 kg, 4.12%)	SG (652 kg, 10.96%)	HK SAR (630 kg, 10.18%)	HK SAR (183 kg, 3.07%)
	KZ (120 kg, 2.02%)	KR (35 kg, 0.57%)	SG (155 kg, 2.6%)
	JP (116 kg, 1.94%)	TH (11 kg, 0.17%)	GB (120 kg, 2.02%)
		CA (7 kg, 0.11%)	KR (4 kg, 0.07%)
		AU (1 kg, 0.02%)	

Based on direct trade, the main trade route based on importer reported data is from China to Japan (36%) followed by Ukraine to China (25%) and Hong Kong SAR to Japan (22%). According to exporter reported data, the main trade route is China to Japan (52%), Ukraine to China (24%) and China to Singapore (13%).

The indirect trade reported by weight mainly comprised of horns that are reported as pre-Convention (16,952 kg reported by exporters; 17,379 kg reported by importers) and wild-sourced (5,915 kg reported by exporters; 5,855 kg reported by importers). The majority of this re-export of horn is by Singapore (96%) imported from Kazakhstan (26-27% based on exporter and importer reported data), the Russian Federation (7-8% based on exporter and importer reported data), and XX (unknown origin; 65-66%). The main importers of indirect trade were Hong Kong, SAR (86% according to importers and 81% according to exporters) and Japan (13% according to importers and 16% according to exporters).

Source I trade

Direct trade in source 'I' (seized/confiscated) *S. tatarica* mainly comprised 19,419 derivatives and 3,215 medicine reported by number, reported by importers only (New Zealand and the United States of America) from 2007 to 2018.

Indirect trade in source I 2007-2018 mainly consisted of derivatives reported by number for commercial and personal purposes and medicine reported by number for commercial and personal purposes, reported mainly by importers (mainly New Zealand and the United States of America).