

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

Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022

Interpretation and implementation matters

Regulation of trade

LABELLING SYSTEM FOR TRADE IN CAVIAR

1. This document has been submitted by the Standing Committee.\*
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 18.146 on *Labelling system for trade in caviar* as follows:

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

**18.146** *The Standing Committee shall, taking into account work undertaken by the Animals Committee and the Standing Committee, with support by the Secretariat between the 17th and 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties:*

- a) *consider the practical challenges in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention with regard to the application of the "CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar" contained in Annex 1 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17) on Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish in light of the recognized shift in many cases from wild-caught specimens to non-wild specimens produced in aquaculture facilities; and*
  - b) *as needed, make recommendations to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to address the identified challenges with the aim of arriving at a practical approach for trade in caviar from aquaculture production.*
3. The intersessional working group on the labelling system for trade in caviar, established by the Standing Committee and with a mandate as set out in [Notification to the Parties No. 2020/081](#), reported to the 74th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC74, Lyon, March 2022) in document [SC74 Doc. 48](#).
  4. The Standing Committee considered the practical challenges in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention with regard to the application of the *CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar* contained in Annex 1 of [Resolution Conf. 12.7 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish* in light of the recognized shift in many instances from trade in wild-caught specimens to non-wild specimens produced in aquaculture facilities. Previous consideration of this issue was reflected in documents [SC69 Doc. 46.1](#), [SC70 Doc. 44.1](#), summary record [AC29 SR](#), in comments provided in AC31 Doc. 16 [Addendum](#); as well as the informal background document prepared by the Secretariat that summarized the aforementioned documents (see Annex to document SC74 Doc. 48).

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\* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

5. The intersessional working group reported to SC74 that it had focussed on the practical challenge associated with the application of the caviar labelling system requirement to provide the ISO country code for the origin of the caviar. Notably, it was identified that, when the caviar produced in an aquaculture facility is the product of multiple fish, each with different origins, it is difficult to include all those country-of-origin codes on the label. The working group had tried to identify a practical solution to this issue, and had considered several options, including a proposal to remove country of origin from the labelling provision and replace it with “country of processing or repackaging” and a proposal to differentiate between requirements for caviar from aquaculture and from the wild, however neither attracted enough support to be recommended by the working group. The Chair of the working group concluded that the group had not been able to identify a practical approach that addresses the complexity of aquaculture production while also addressing concerns regarding the need to maintain transparent traceability systems in support of enforcement and ensuring legal, sustainable trade.
6. The Standing Committee furthermore considered the information provided by the intersessional working group on the discussions relating to the benefits and drawbacks of using QR codes for labelling, as suggested in the informal background document prepared by the Secretariat. There were mixed views, with some support for proposing inclusion of QR codes as a way to provide fulsome tracking information, including production and packaging dates. However, challenges were also identified in terms of technological capabilities and size of the code needed. While there were mixed views on the utility of a QR system, there was general agreement that the use of QR codes could merit further exploration.
7. The Standing Committee noted the report and agreed to propose the deletion of Decision 18.146 as well as the submission of new draft decisions for consideration by the 19th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP19) to continue the work on a caviar labelling system.
8. The Committee furthermore requested the Secretariat to work with the Standing Committee Chair to propose to CoP19 a new sub-paragraph b) in draft decision 19.BB (see summary record SC74 SR) in order to consider reviewing the caviar labelling system and opportunities to improve the functioning of the caviar labelling system and make recommendations to CoP20, taking into account the study on *Identification of species, subspecies, source and origin of sturgeons and paddlefish species and specimens (Acipensiformes spp.) in trade* in the Annex to document [SC74 Doc. 47](#). The proposed draft decisions are contained in Annex 1 to the present document.

Recommendations:

9. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
  - a) adopt the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 to the present document; and
  - b) delete Decision 18.146.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The Secretariat recommends that the Conference of the Parties adopt the draft decision contained in Annex 1 to the present document.
- B. The proposed study on QR codes for caviar labelling could be a potential pilot for more general work on the use of QR and verifiable credentials (VCs) for CITES controls.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON LABELLING SYSTEM FOR TRADE IN CAVIAR

**Directed to the Secretariat**

**19.AA** Subject to external funding, the Secretariat shall prepare, in consultation with relevant information technology, industry and other experts, an analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating QR codes into the application of the *CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar* contained in Annex 1 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*, and present its analysis and recommendations to the Standing Committee.

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

**19.BB** The Standing Committee shall:

- a) consider the report on the use of QR codes in the application of the *CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar* prepared by the Secretariat; and
- b) taking into account the study on *Identification of species, subspecies, source and origin of sturgeons and paddlefish species and specimens (Acipensiformes spp.) in trade* in the Annex to document SC74 Doc. 47, review the caviar labelling system set out in *CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar*, considering practical challenges in its implementation and opportunities to improve its functioning; and
- c) make recommendations to improve the functioning of the caviar labelling system to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

**TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING  
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS**

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP18) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding.

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Indicative costs (USD)</b> (excludes Programme Support Costs)	<b>Source of funding</b>
19.AA	Technical study – an analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating QR codes into the application of the CITES guidelines for a universal labelling system for the trade in and identification of caviar contained in Annex 1 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17)	25,000	Extrabudgetary funds