

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



Twenty-sixth meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 5 – 9 June 2023

Species specific matters

Boswellia trees (*Boswellia* spp.)

CONSERVATION STATUS, TRADE AND THREATS TO THE GENUS BOSWELLIA (FRANKINCENSE)

1. This document has been submitted by Switzerland.*

Background

2. At its 18th meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.205 to 18.208 on *Boswellia* trees which included a request for the Secretariat to issue a notification to the Parties asking for information on, inter alia, biological and identification data, harvest and exploitation levels, regulations, management measures, supply chains and levels of international trade. The information received from Parties was submitted to the 25th Meeting of the Plants Committee in document [PC25 Doc. 25](#) and [PC25 Doc. 25 Add](#) as well as in information documents [PC25 Inf. 3](#), [PC25 Inf. 7](#), and [PC25 Inf. 18](#).
3. Based on the recommendations contained in said documents, the Plants Committee established an in-session working group and based on the output of this group further recommendations were adopted, acknowledging the remaining gaps in knowledge outlined in the addendum and encouraging range States to consider including *Boswellia* species in Appendix III. It was noted that the Secretariat received funding to commission a short consultancy for additional research on specific aspects included in Decision 18.205 but that this report had been delayed and would be submitted to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
4. The Committee agreed to submit draft decisions to the Nineteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties which were subsequently adopted as Decisions 19.241 and 19.242:

Directed to the Secretariat

19.241 *The Secretariat shall share the report in information document [CoP19 Inf. 10 \(Rev. 1\)](#) with the Plants Committee.*

Directed to the Plants Committee

19.242 *The Plants Committee shall:*

* *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.*

- a) identify meetings or other venues that might provide opportunities to collaborate or share information regarding harvest and management of these species; and
- b) review the available information submitted by the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 19.241 and the gaps in knowledge identified in document [PC25 Doc. 25](#) on *Boswellia* trees (*Boswellia* spp.) to inform possible listing proposals for *Boswellia* species, including consideration of appropriate annotations consistent with the guidance in Resolution Conf. 11.21 (Rev. CoP19) on Use of annotations in Appendices I and II.

Update

5. As outlined in information document [CoP19 Inf.72](#), the programme “Conservation status, trade and threats to *Boswellia* species (frankincense)”, led by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, was initiated in 2021 in order to focus on gathering new information, make practical assessments, and clarify relevant topics through active research and the provision of scientifically robust data to support decision making for the many and varied stakeholders with an interest in frankincense.
6. Further to information contained in that document the following research is ongoing, with completion of the main components by the end of 2023 and reporting, dissemination and recommendations in the first half of 2024:
 - a) assessment of the utility and applicability of DART-ToFMS as a chemical screening tool for *Boswellia* spp. and their derived resins and products, based upon collection of certified samples from the majority of species and the majority of range States;
 - b) collection of field data on tree and population health, levels of harvesting, threats and local market chains on species and in range States currently under-represented in global and regional studies (*B. dalzielii*, *B. microphylla*, *B. neglecta*, *B. rivae*, *B. sacra*); this based upon a developed systematic and repeatable field survey methodology that is being undertaken by local authorities and stakeholders;
 - c) clarification of the taxonomy of *B. sacra*/*B. carteri* and *B. microphylla*/*B. neglecta* through detailed herbarium studies to verify the taxonomic and nomenclatural status of these species pairs, and development of diagnostic image-based key for all *Boswellia* species;
 - d) collation of all distribution data for all species, focusing on taxonomically verifiable herbarium specimens that are being georeferenced, leading to Species Distribution Modelling to inform conservation, sustainable use, restoration and development policy;
 - e) establishment of an online resource to hold all information about *Boswellia* spp. in a single focused location that can be accessed for research, conservation and management purposes, based upon extensive use case scenarios of actual and potential users;
 - f) global and national Red List Assessments and Green Status Assessments developed with range State partners to highlight extinction probability and potential amelioration factors for use in national, regional and global planning;
 - g) recommendations for additional or expanded research required to properly assess whether any *Boswellia* spp. could be proposed for Listing, and what the effects of this listing might be;

Recommendations:

7. The Plant committee is invited to:
 - a) consider the information in the present document for further actions on *Boswellia* spp.
 - b) The Secretariat should organize a meeting with the Range States based on this information to get their input.
 - c) Subject to available funds, a meeting could be organized in the framework of the next frankincense symposium to be held in Salalah/Oman.

- d) submit the outcomes of the ongoing project on Boswellia at the end of 2023 to the next meeting of PC27 and discuss the results in an in-session working group.