

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



Twenty-ninth meeting of the Animals Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 July 2017

Species specific matters

Aquatic species

QUEEN CONCH (*STROMBUS GIGAS*)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 17.285 to 17.290 on *Queen Conch* (*Strombus gigas*). The following Decisions are pertinent to the work of the Animals Committee:

***Directed to the Animals Committee***

- 17.287 *If requested by range States of S. gigas, the Animals Committee shall provide advice regarding the making of non-detriment findings for trade in S. gigas, research in support of sustainable queen conch fishery and trade, and other technical matters.*
- 17.288 *The Animals Committee shall review the process for the setting of scientific quotas for queen conch, in particular where scientific quotas make up a large portion of the overall export quota.*

***Directed to the Secretariat***

- 17.289 *The Secretariat shall, pending the availability of external funding,*
- a) *continue to collaborate with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Working Group on Queen Conch composed of the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC), the Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA, Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus), the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), WECAFC and other relevant international and regional bodies to provide assistance to range States of S. gigas in order to enhance the capacity of their CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, fisheries authorities and other stakeholders to implement the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan and apply the NDF guidance;*
  - b) *monitor the development of traceability systems for queen conch; provide assistance, as appropriate, to FAO, the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch and others in reviewing options for the development of an auditable "chain of custody" procedure; and report relevant developments to the Standing Committee; and*
  - c) *continue to provide assistance to range States of S. gigas on relevant enforcement issues, and report new developments in this regard to the Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

### Implementation of Decisions 17.287 and 17.289

3. At the time of writing of this document (May 2017), no source of external funding for the implementation of Decision 17.289 has been identified. The Secretariat is working closely with FAO and relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to raise the necessary resources for undertaking this important work.
4. Regarding Decision 17.287, the Secretariat would like to draw attention to the adoption of the NDF guideline format for trade in Caribbean Queen Conch<sup>1</sup>, developed in collaboration with CITES and agreed by the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission at its 16th meeting (Guadeloupe, June 2016).

### Implementation of Decision 17.288 – review of the process for the setting of scientific quotas for queen conch

5. In Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15) on *Management of nationally established export quotas*, the Conference of the Parties agreed to adopt guidelines for the management of nationally established annual export quotas, which specify general principles in the context of CITES.
6. However, Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15) and the Guidelines contained in the annex do not include guidance related to the setting of quotas for a specific purpose, e.g. scientific. “Scientific quotas” are not mentioned or defined as such in the Resolution, which consequently does not provide any specific guidance in this regard.
7. Pursuant to Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on *Permits and certificates* and the guidelines in Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15), many Parties have submitted their voluntarily export quotas to the Secretariat, which maintains information on national export quotas on its [website](#) since the year 2000.
8. Nicaragua is the only Party that has recorded export quotas for specimens of *Strombus gigas* with a specific reference to scientific purposes, summarized in the table below. For 2010 and 2012, Nicaragua did not submit export quotas for publication by the Secretariat.

Table 1: Export quotas submitted by Nicaragua for *Strombus gigas*

	2007	2008	2009	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
meat (kg)	113,398	113,398	113,398	340,500	589,670	589,670	589,670	589,670	
meat for scientific purposes (kg)	45,359	45,359	45,359	45,359	45,359	45,359	45,454	45,359	
trimmings (kg)	51,029	51,029	51,029	150,822	261,425	261,425	261,425	261,425	
trimmings for scientific purposes (kg)	20,109	20,109	20,109	20,109	20,109	20,109	20,151	20,151	20,151
shells (pce)		750,000	750,000	2,250,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	
shells for scientific purposes (kg)			300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000			
opercula (pce)	750,000	750,000	750,000	2,250,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	3,900,000	
opercula for scientific purposes (kg)	300,000		300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000

9. In some instances, export quotas stem from past Review of Significant Trade processes. Honduras participated in the Review of Significant Trade (RST) for *Strombus gigas* (2003-2005). The Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair of the Animals Committee, determined that Honduras had complied with all short- and long-term recommendations. The RST in *Strombus gigas* from Honduras was therefore concluded in 2006, with Honduras formally committing to take additional measures (See document [AC22 Inf.4](#) for a detailed account). Among these measures, Honduras committed to:

<sup>1</sup> The NDF guidelines were developed by FAO/WECAFC as one of the outputs of the joint capacity building project on queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) in the Caribbean region implemented after the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and were discussed and revised at the second meeting of the joint CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch (QCWG, November 2014, Panama City). They are also published on the Queen Conch page of the CITES Website.

- a) *maintain a moratorium on the queen conch fishery until scientifically justified annual harvest and export quotas for queen conch can be established, based on research and analyses of the status of the exploitation and abundance of the resource in Honduras;*
  - f) *ensure that the scientific catch obtained in the monitoring and stock assessment cruises does not exceed 20 % of the 2003 clean-meat reported landings (i.e. does not exceed 210 tones), which is considered precautionary taking into consideration the levels of production during the 10 years preceding the moratorium on the fishery that was established in September 2003;*
  - g) *issue CITES export permits for the scientific catch to cover the considerable costs required to implement a queen conch stock assessment plan over a wide area of the Honduras continental shelf;*
10. Pursuant to paragraph f) and g) of these commitments, Honduras maintained an export quota of 210 tons of queen conch meat per year from 2006 to 2015, reflecting scientific catch obtained in monitoring and stock assessment cruises. The export of these catches was expected to cover the costs of the research and analysis relating to the status of queen conch in Honduras, and the establishment of scientifically justified annual harvests and export quotas. The annual quotas that Honduras announced between 2006 and 2015 might therefore be referred to as “scientific” quotas, meaning that they allowed the Party to build up a scientific body of knowledge that allows it to harvest and trade in the species in a non-detrimental manner, and in accordance with the provisions of CITES. The purpose of the export of these “scientific” quotas was commercial.
11. Based on the observations above, the Secretariat concludes that the use and scope of the term “scientific quota for queen conch” is not entirely clear. It could be used to describe a commercial export quota to finance scientific activities, but could also refer to an export quota limited to trade transactions with a scientific purpose (Purpose code “S” in the CITES trade database). The Secretariat reminds Parties that, in both instances, the provisions of Article IV, including the necessity to make non-detriment findings, apply.

#### Recommendation

12. The Animals Committee is invited to consider how it wishes to approach its mandate to review the process for the setting of scientific quotas for queen conch.