

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



Twenty-ninth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-22 July 2017

Species specific matters

Aquatic species

STURGEONS
[RESOLUTION CONF. 12.7 (REV. COP17)]
(agenda item 20)

Membership (as decided by the Committee)

- Chair: the alternate representative of North America (Ms. Caceres);
- Parties: Canada, China, Estonia, European Union, France, Italy, Japan, Madagascar, Russian Federation, Ukraine and United States of America; and
- IGOs and NGOs: Association of Midwest Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Association of Northeast Fish and Wildlife Agencies, IWMC World Conservation Trust, TRAFFIC, and WWF.

Mandate

Taking into account the information provided in document AC29 Doc. 20.1 and discussions in plenary, the working group shall:

- a) consider the information submitted by range States of Acipenseriformes in the Annex to AC29 Doc. 20.1 and propose a consolidated version of the table of shared stocks for consideration by the Animals Committee and subsequent reporting to the Standing Committee; and
- b) consider the issue of the definition of “country of origin of caviar” and provide scientific advice, as appropriate, on the definition in document CoP17 Doc. 50 and, where appropriate, make recommendations to be brought to the attention of the Standing Committee in that regard.

Recommendations

The working group on sturgeons recommends the following be agreed by the Animals Committee for transmission to the Standing Committee:

1. With respect to Annex 3 of Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17) on *Conservation of and trade in sturgeons and paddlefish*, the Animals Committee:
 - i) Observes that not enough scientific information is available to the Committee to make conclusive recommendations on the amendments proposed by the Russian Federation to the table in Annex 3 regarding the delimitation of stocks in the North-West Black Sea and Lower Danube;
 - ii) Encourages all CITES Parties bordering the Black Sea and Danube river to collaborate on research to address knowledge gaps regarding the distribution and migration of stocks of sturgeon species in their respective jurisdictions, in particular molecular and genetic studies, to establish the basis for science-

based delimitation of stocks in the Danube and Black Sea and submit the results of such research to the next meeting of the Animals Committee or the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

- iii) Recommends to cooperate with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the implementation of the above mentioned study
 - iv) Noting the information provided by Ukraine in its response contained in AC29 Doc. 20.1 Annex 1 which suggests that the Lower Danube and North-West Black Sea stock are connected, and noting Russia's views based on experience in other basins that mixing of sturgeons from different tributaries occurs, the Standing Committee may wish to consider the option of proposing amendments to the table in Annex 3 as follows "~~North-west~~ Black Sea and Lower Danube stock" subject to the availability of relevant scientific data and consultation with other Parties from the region.
2. With respect to the definition of "country of origin of caviar", no consensus was reached. The Animals Committee provides the following points for consideration by the Standing Committee:
- i) It is clear that trade in caviar from aquaculture facilities has increased and is the major source of caviar in trade. There is a wide variety of specialised sturgeon aquaculture facilities and production methods that can encompass movement of fish at various life stages and mixing within the facilities. As such, there is a desire to create a practical approach to the caviar trade system in light of the current production systems.
 - ii) Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on *Permits and certificates* provides a definition of "country of origin" to be applied to CITES permits. The proposed change in the definition of country of origin of caviar in Resolution Conf. 12.7 (Rev. CoP17) would need to be reflected in Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev.CoP17) as an exception to the current definition.
 - iii) Some concern was raised that the change in the definition of country of origin reflected in Decision 17.185 may be problematic for countries where roe is harvested from wild specimens and creates concerns with traceability. There was concern expressed that, in principle, this type of change could be applied to other complex production systems (such as in products derived from skins from multiple sources).
 - iv) However, others noted that the current system is unnecessarily cumbersome for aquaculture practices and that the conservation risks associated with the change in definition of country of origin are small.
 - v) It was noted that strict controls are needed on wild harvest to prevent laundering from wild sources into aquaculture such that one additional proposal was to include both the "country of origin of roe" and the "country of origin of caviar" in the universal labelling system. It was further noted that the proposed definition of "country of origin of roe" is equivalent to the current approach for the definition of "country of origin" in Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17).
 - vi) There is agreement that strict controls are needed for wild caught specimens and to prevent laundering from wild populations. There is further agreement that a practical approach for trade in caviar from aquaculture production may be needed. There are mixed views regarding addressing the issue with a change to the definition of country of origin that would apply to both the labelling system and to the CITES permit. The Standing Committee might wish to consider if there are other creative solutions to arrive at a practical caviar trading system in light of the recognized shift in source from wild to aquaculture.