

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Plants Committee
Lima (Peru), 3-8 July 2006

Production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species

REVIEW OF GLOBAL CROCODILE RANCHING PROGRAMMES

1. This document was submitted by Switzerland and has been prepared by the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG).
2. With funding provided by the Swiss Government, the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) undertook, in cooperation with the CITES Secretariat, a detailed review of global crocodile ranching programmes according to the following terms of reference:
 - a) Compile a list of all species and populations that were transferred from Appendix I to II pursuant to all proposals that included ranching under any Resolution for each CSG Region (ranching proposals and ranching under unqualified Appendix-II listing).
 - b) Compile the history of operations subsequent to transfer from Appendix I to II and the current status of all ranching operations.
 - c) Review crocodile management at a national level subsequent to transfer from Appendix I to II.
 - d) Review the status of species and populations in terms of the criteria of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP12) and Resolution Conf. 11.16, and examine the relationship with ranching and the sustainability of programmes where ranching is combined with a wild harvest.
 - e) Compile and harmonize national accounts for review and discussion by CSG in May 2004.
3. The full report, containing detailed results of the review together with conclusions reached and recommended actions to rectify identified problems, is available as an information document (see document AC22 Inf. 2).
4. On the basis of consultations with national CITES Management Authorities, producer organizations, individual producers and CSG members, information was collected from 23 countries; Africa (15); South and Central America (5), United States of America, Papua New Guinea and Australia, on crocodilian ranching programmes that operate in accordance with:
 - a) specific provisions of Resolution Conf. 3.15 on 'Ranching' and Resolution Conf. 11.16 on 'Ranching and trade in ranched specimens' (see Annex), which detail operational and reporting requirements, including the need to demonstrate an ongoing 'conservation advantage'; and,
 - b) general conditions of Appendix II, i.e. the provisions of Article IV of the Convention, which require demonstration of non-detriment rather than conservation advantage.

5. The scope, range of activities and effectiveness of ranching programmes as a management strategy varied widely among the Parties from which information was received. This was also the case for the measures that were taken to fully implement the requirements of Resolution Conf. 11.16.
6. Parties that conduct ranching operations in accordance with Resolution Conf. 11.16 are required to report information specified in that Resolution to the CITES Secretariat.
7. No Party complies fully with the reporting requirements of Resolution Conf. 11.16. However, several Parties have made considerable progress with what may be considered the most important requirements from a conservation and management viewpoint, namely those related to the impact of ranching on the status of the wild population(s) subject to ranching.
8. Given the increased experience with crocodile ranching, the utility of some information requirements is questioned. Even when provided, the information is rarely if ever used in any constructive way. A strategic review of reporting requirements of Resolution Conf. 11.16 is timely.
9. Some of the problems encountered by Parties that affects reporting, are:
 - a) Stock derived from ranching operations is often mixed in facilities with stock derived from other sources (*e.g.* captive breeding). Grading and re-sorting of crocodiles in accordance with size is required to maximize welfare considerations and improve production efficiency. If separation according to origin were required, operations could require duplication of raising facilities that would be a very serious practical and economic burden. The common practice of mixing stock on most ranches also complicates the allocation of appropriate source codes on CITES export permits.
 - b) Some Parties lack the capacity within their national Management Authority to regulate and manage ranching schemes in accordance with Resolution Conf. 11.16.
 - c) The costs associated with conducting population surveys required to fulfil Resolution Conf. 11.16 can be very high relative to the revenues generated from crocodile utilization through ranching.
10. The highest priority in reporting on Resolution Conf. 11.16 ranching programmes should be the verification of 'conservation benefit' and prevention of illegal trade.
11. Ranching of crocodylians is now a widespread management practice that has worked successfully in many countries with differing socio-economic levels, technical capabilities and crocodylian species. Nowhere has ranching been associated with or been alleged to be the cause of detrimental effects on wild populations.
12. There is now considerable evidence to demonstrate that ranching, when applied to crocodylians, is not only an inherently 'safe' and robust form of sustainable utilization relative to wild harvest of adults, but also that conservation benefits for Appendix-I species can be derived through international trade if the wild harvest strategy employed is conservative, safe, strictly regulated and subject to reporting.
13. Current and future management regimes adopted by the Conference of the Parties to CITES should attempt, wherever possible, to provide Parties with more flexibility when they are attempting to implement conservative and effective management prescriptions to a broader range of species.

Recommendations

14. From the analyses and considerations contained in the report, the current reporting requirements on ranching operations that constitute a section of the annual report by a Party can be reduced and simplified as follows:
 - a) Status of the wild population concerned. Established by monitoring at an appropriate frequency and with sufficient precision to allow recognition of changes in population trend owing to ranching;

- b) Number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild; and
 - c) Production and exports of products.
15. The foregoing information is sufficient to assist Parties in evaluating their own programmes, and allows the CITES Secretariat to monitor ranching programmes to apply the provisions of Resolution Conf. 11.16 in case of non-compliance. This reduced reporting is proposed to be a requirement.
16. Information on the following topics would assist Management Authorities to assess the effectiveness of their own programmes, and in conjunction with the information in paragraph 13, i) to iii) above, to regulate effectively ranching operations as well as facilitating the making of non-detriment findings by the Scientific Authority. Provided this information is made available on request to the CITES Secretariat, there should be no requirement for it to be transmitted annually:
- a) Estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;
 - b) Number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;
 - c) Mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality; and
 - d) Conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned.
17. It is proposed that Resolution Conf. 11.16 be amended accordingly.

RESOLUTION CONF. 11.16 RANCHING AND TRADE IN RANCHED SPECIMENS OF SPECIES
TRANSFERRED FROM APPENDIX I TO APPENDIX II

RECALLING Resolution Conf. 5.16 (Rev.), adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting (Buenos Aires, 1985) and amended at its 10th meeting (Harare, 1997), and Resolution Conf. 10.18 adopted at its 10th meeting;

NOTING that the terms of Resolution Conf. 10.16 (Rev.) on specimens of animal species bred in captivity, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 10th meeting (Harare, 1997) and amended at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000), do not allow the entry into trade of specimens of species included in Appendix I that have been taken from the wild and reared in captivity, except in accordance with the provisions of Article III of the Convention;

RECOGNIZING that some successful programmes for the conservation of certain species permit specimens of those species into international trade on the basis that such trade is no longer detrimental to the survival of their wild populations;

RECALLING Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev.), adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting (Fort Lauderdale, 1994) and amended at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000), which recommends that Parties consider all products of ranching operations to be readily recognizable;

RECOGNIZING that marking of parts and derivatives in trade from ranched animals is necessary to achieve adequate control;

RECOGNIZING that, if each Party establishes a different marking system for parts and derivatives of ranched animals of the same species, confusion will result and enforcement will be difficult;

BELIEVING that any proposal to transfer to Appendix II, for ranching, a species for which such a proposal has previously been approved should be consistent with the approved proposal in its intent and in the terms and conditions it specifies;

RECOGNIZING that, in accordance with Article XIV of the Convention, Parties may adopt more restrictive domestic controls on trade in specimens of populations included in the Appendices;

CONSIDERING the necessity of transferring populations back to Appendix I if it is established that ranching operations utilizing them no longer meet the criteria;

AWARE that ranching of crocodylians on the basis of controlled collection of eggs or hatchlings can be potentially a valuable and positive conservation tool, whereas taking of wild adult animals needs stricter control;

CONSCIOUS of the danger of providing greater incentives for the establishment of captive-breeding operations, which may damage efforts to conserve wild populations, than for ranching operations, which in principle are more beneficial to crocodylian conservation;

EMPHASIZING that the overriding objective of the Convention is to conserve wild populations of the species listed in the Appendices and that positive incentives must be offered to programmes designed to achieve this aim;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

Regarding definitions

DECIDES that:

- a) the term 'ranching' means the rearing in a controlled environment of specimens taken from the wild;
and

- b) the term 'uniform marking system' means a system of marking each product approved by the Conference of the Parties for a species, which, as a minimum, includes the International Organization for Standardization two-letter code for the country of origin, a unique identification number and the year of production or, for products in stock or manufactured from products of the operation in stock at the time of the proposal, the year of approval of the proposal;

Regarding proposals to transfer populations from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching

RECOMMENDS that:

- a) populations of species included in Appendix I that occur within the jurisdiction of Parties and are deemed by the Conference of the Parties to be no longer endangered and to benefit by ranching with the intention of trade be included in Appendix II;
- b) in order to be considered by the Conference of the Parties, any proposal to transfer a population to Appendix II in order to conduct a ranching programme satisfy the following general criteria:
- i) the programme must be primarily beneficial to the conservation of the local population (i.e., where applicable, contribute to its increase in the wild or promote protection of the species's habitat while maintaining a stable population);
 - ii) all products (including live specimens) of each operation must be adequately identified and documented to ensure that they can be readily distinguished from products of Appendix-I populations;
 - iii) the programme must have in place appropriate inventories, harvest-level controls and mechanisms to monitor the wild populations; and
 - iv) there must be sufficient safeguards established in the programme to ensure that adequate numbers of animals are returned to the wild if necessary and where appropriate;
- c) any Party submitting a ranching proposal for a population of a species, whether or not a ranching proposal has been approved for the species previously, include in the proposal the following, in addition to the usual biological data requested for proposals to amend the Appendices:
- i) details of its marking system that should meet the minimum requirements of the uniform marking system defined in this Resolution;
 - ii) a list specifying the types of products produced by the operation;
 - iii) a description of the methods that will be used to mark all products and containers entered into trade; and
 - iv) an inventory of current stocks of specimens of the species concerned, whether or not they are from the ranching operation;
- d) any proposal for the transfer to Appendix II of a Party's population or a smaller geographically separate population of a species, for the purpose of ranching, not be approved by the Conference unless it contains the following:
- i) evidence that the taking from the wild will have no significant detrimental impact on wild populations;
 - ii) an assessment of the likelihood of the biological and economic success of each ranching operation;
 - iii) assurance that the operation shall be carried out at all stages in a humane (non-cruel) manner;
 - iv) documented evidence to demonstrate that the programme is beneficial to the wild population through reintroduction or in other ways; and

- v) assurance that the criteria specified in paragraph b) above under 'RECOMMENDS' shall continue to be met;
- e) in order to be discussed at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, any proposal for amendment of the Appendices pursuant to this Resolution be received by the Secretariat at least 330 days before that meeting. In consultation with the Animals Committee, the Secretariat shall seek appropriate scientific and technical advice to verify that the criteria specified in paragraph d) above under 'RECOMMENDS' have been met and to review the information and assurances in the proposal that are specified in paragraph d) above. If in the opinion of the Secretariat further information concerning the criteria is required, the Secretariat shall request information from the proposing Party within 150 days after receipt. Thereafter, the Secretariat shall communicate with the Parties in accordance with Article XV of the Convention;
- f) proposals that include a component of a wild-adult harvest be examined much more stringently than those based purely on collection of eggs, neonates, larvae or other juvenile life stages;
- g) Parties achieving or having achieved the transfer of their populations of a species to Appendix II under the provisions of this Resolution limit the manner of exploitation of wild populations to those techniques described in their proposals and not, for example, later initiate new short-term programmes for taking wild animals without notifying the Secretariat;
- h) any Party with an approved ranching proposal submit any changes to the information supplied in paragraph c) above under 'RECOMMENDS' to the Secretariat. The Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals Committee, should determine whether the changes proposed substantially alter the original ranching programme, and undermine or jeopardize the conservation of the wild population. The Secretariat should advise the Party of its determination accordingly; and
- i) in cases where the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals Committee, concludes that changes to the ranching programme that are proposed in accordance with paragraph h) would result in substantial changes to management of the species, the proposed management be treated as a new proposal, requiring the submission of a proposal pursuant to this Resolution and to the requirements of Article XV of the Convention;

Regarding trade in ranched specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II

RECOMMENDS that all Parties prohibit trade in products of ranching operations unless such trade complies with all the terms, conditions and requirements of the approved ranching proposal for the population concerned; and

Regarding monitoring and reporting in relation to species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching

RECOMMENDS that:

- a) annual reports on all relevant aspects of each approved ranching operation be submitted to the Secretariat by the Party concerned, and include any new information on the following:
 - i) the status of the wild population concerned;
 - ii) the number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild;
 - iii) an estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;
 - iv) the number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;
 - v) the mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality;
 - vi) production, sales and exports of products; and

- vii) conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned;
- b) with the consent of the Standing Committee and the Party concerned, the Secretariat should have the option to visit and examine a ranching operation wherever circumstances require it to do so; and
- c) where the Secretariat reports failure to comply with this Resolution, and the Standing Committee and the Party concerned fail to resolve the matter satisfactorily, the Standing Committee may, after full consultation with the Party concerned, request the Depository Government to prepare a proposal to transfer the population concerned back to Appendix I; and

REPEALS the Resolutions listed hereunder:

- a) Resolution Conf. 5.16 (Rev.) (Buenos Aires, 1985, as amended at Harare, 1997) – Trade in ranched specimens; and
- b) Resolution Conf. 10.18 (Harare, 1997) – Ranching and trade in ranched specimens.