

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Plants Committee  
Buenos Aires (Argentina), 17-21 March 2009

Annotations

AMENDMENT OF THE ANNOTATION FOR APPENDIX-II ORCHIDS TO EXEMPT SEED PODS

1. This document has been submitted by the United States of America\*.
2. The current annotation for Appendix-II Orchidaceae, Annotation #1, specifies that seeds are exempt from CITES controls, but it does not exempt seedpods (fruits). This suggests that, while the entire contents of a seedpod could be removed and entered into trade without a CITES permit or certificate, the seedpod itself, whether empty or full of seed, would require such a document.
3. In practice, orchid growers frequently harvest seedpods before they are fully ripe, so that the contents (i.e., the seeds) remain sterile. The exterior of the seedpod is then sterilized, and under sterile conditions, it is opened and the seed removed from it and placed in flasks in sterile media for germination. Not all species and hybrids of orchids have their fruits harvested as "green pods", because some show improved germination rates if allowed to mature further before harvesting. However, many others show improved germination rates when harvested at the "green" stage, in addition to the concerns about maintaining sterile conditions. This practice was recognized in document Doc. 8.27 (prepared for CoP8), in which it was further stated that "*since the ripening of the pods must be monitored carefully and the fruits need to be harvested at the appropriate time, wild-collected fruits of orchids are virtually never used for this purpose.*"
4. Our experience in the United States indicates that very few CITES documents are being issued for orchid seedpods. This may indicate either a low interest in trading these types of specimens or that such specimens are being traded outside of CITES controls. In either case, we are not aware of any conservation concerns attributed to either legal or illegal trade in orchid seedpods.
5. The United States is seeking input from the Plants Committee on potential risks and/or benefits of an exemption for orchid seedpods, particularly with regard to wild-collected specimens, and the advisability of submitting a proposal to CoP15 to amend the annotation for Appendix-II orchids to include such an exemption.

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