

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



Twenty-second meeting of the Plants Committee
Tbilisi (Georgia), 19-23 October 2015

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

TRADE IN ARTIFICIALLY PROPAGATED PLANTS [DECISION 14.40 (REV. COP16)]

1. This document has been submitted by the cochairs of the working group on reporting trade in artificially propagated plants.*
2. The mandate of the working group was as follows:
 - a) in accordance with Decision 14.40 (Rev. CoP16), and taking account of the report of the Secretariat, consider whether there are Appendix-II taxa of plants for which detailed reporting of trade in artificially propagated specimens “is less valuable”;
 - b) consider the different options to revise reporting of trade in artificially propagated plants listed in Appendix II, presented in Annex 2 to document [PC21 Doc.16](#); and
 - c) submit a report with draft findings and recommendations at the 22nd meeting of the Plants Committee for its consideration.
3. Underlying reasons for the working group tasks were first explored towards understanding the problem and different perspectives. The working group members were asked if there is a significant reporting burden that should be reduced and if there is a need for detailed reporting to the lowest taxonomic level possible to help ensure protection of wild plant populations.
4. The responses clarified that it is not the preparation of the annual reports themselves that creates the workload, but the data entry associated with species-level data from permits that is used as the basis for the annual reports. For example, one permit can have an inventory of hundreds of species of artificially propagated Appendix II plants which would mean hundreds of individual data records that could be summarized at a higher taxonomic level in a single data record. A few of the respondents indicated that the requirement to enter data and subsequently report at a species level for artificially propagated Appendix II plants is, or would be, a significant burden. For example, a working group member explained that a single data entry technician could no longer enter one years’ worth of data in a year’s time and noted the associated challenge of meeting the annual report deadline. Other respondents, even with high trade levels, did not find this requirement to be burdensome. In some of these cases, reporting was not considered a burden because of the view that reporting is considered important. From the responses, it could be deduced that some countries may employ certain measures to expedite data entry. The

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observation was also made that some of the species-level documentation burden may simply be due to the recording of species-level data for imports of Appendix II species, which is not required under the Convention. Thus, some of the burden experienced is not being imposed by CITES *per se*. Based on the small sample of CITES countries represented in the working group, it can be concluded that the requirement to enter data and report is (or would be) burdensome for some countries.

5. Regarding the ability to protect wild populations, working group members considered species-level data in the CITES Trade Database, derived from annual reports, for artificially propagated Appendix II exports useful:
 - a) to detect laundering of wild specimens as artificially propagated specimens by:
 - i. monitoring trade trends to detect shifts in source codes over time; and
 - ii. monitoring trade trends to detect sharp increases in trade of artificially propagated specimens (including for newly-described taxa);
 - b) to identify species for review under the significant trade process or the periodic review process;
 - c) to inform inquiries about whether shipments are likely to be artificially propagated (e.g., Resolution Conf. 11.11 requirements may not be necessarily be met with respect to mother stock for species newly in trade); and
 - d) to provide an opportunity to implement the Convention's guidelines of ex situ/in situ cooperation (Resolution Conf. 3.9)
6. One of the working group members noted however that the PC21 Doc. 16 report by UNEP-WCMC investigated shifts in trade from wild to artificially propagated sources, for species already in trade, and found little evidence. It is likely that the shifts for many species happened long ago. Thus, reporting at species level may not be useful to detect shifts for species already in trade. The report also concluded that it is not possible to say whether the WCMC trade dataset for Appendix II artificially propagated plants contributed significantly to the detection of illegal trade or any other analysis related to the conservation of wild flora. It was also commented that the data for artificially propagated plants are not currently used for the Significant Trade Review or Periodic Review process.
7. One of the working group members felt the focus of the working group should have been on identifying if and which taxa would be suitable candidates for simplified reports when traded as artificially propagated. Throughout discussions, working group members mentioned cases where detailed reporting may not be useful in helping conservation of wild plants and these included artificially propagated "unproblematic" orchid species, plant cultivars, as well as hybrids of orchids and cacti. These may be specimens where reporting at a higher taxonomic level may be reasonable with no conservation risk. It was noted however that the majority of trade in plant hybrids is orchid hybrids and the *Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of CITES Annual Reports* already state that orchid hybrids may be reported at higher taxonomic level (family). Further, the Convention (Article VIII.6(b)) states that the CITES Annual Reports should contain the "...names of species as included in Appendices I, II and III..." which could be at the species, genus or family level.
8. The working group considered the four options to revise reporting of trade in artificially propagated plants listed in Appendix II (PC21 Doc.16 Annex 2). Throughout the discussions of the options, it became clear that flexibility already exists under the Convention for reporting. As such, Parties are reporting following the *Guidelines for the Preparation of CITES Annual Reports* where possible, in consideration of their data entry capacity, their obligations under the Convention and the need to protect wild plants. The majority of respondents indicated that detailed reporting at the lowest taxonomic level would be particularly useful for taxa emerging in trade while noting that it would be up to the Party to recognize and report new species in trade unless a list was created and maintained.
9. Thanks to the vital contributions of its members, the working group was able to clarify the issues around reporting burden, the reporting obligations imposed by the Convention, and the value of reporting in terms of protection for wild plants. The co-chairs would like to thank the members of the working group for their enthusiastic participation in this discussion.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that Parties continue to report trade in artificially propagated Appendix II plants at the species level consistent with the *Guidelines for the Preparation and Submission of CITES Annual Reports* when possible, taking into account data entry capacity and in consideration of conservation priorities such as the value in species level reporting for new species in trade.