

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



Twenty-fifth meeting of the Plants Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 17 and 20-23 July 2020

Species specific matters

AGARWOOD-PRODUCING TAXA (AQUILARIA SPP. AND GYRINOPS SPP.)

1. This document has been submitted by the Chair of the Plants Committee.*

Background

2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.203 - 18.204 on *Agarwood-producing taxa (Aquilaria spp. and Gyrinops spp.)*, as follows:

18.203 Directed to the Plants Committee

The Plants Committee shall:

- a) *monitor the implementation of Resolution Conf. 16.10 on Implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa to assess any potential conservation impacts to the long-term survival of agarwood-producing species and possible problems arising from the implementation, by:*
 - i) *developing a questionnaire on potential conservation issues in the implementation of Resolution Conf. 16.10 on Implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa to be circulated to the Parties through a Notification, and analysing the responses received;*
 - ii) *examining available trade data; and*
 - iii) *analysing available data on the conservation status of agarwood-producing species; and*
- b) *report findings and recommendations to the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties and advise on the need for a study to further assess impacts of harvest, management and trade in agarwood products on the conservation of agarwood-producing species in the wild.*

18.204 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall assist the Plants Committee in the implementation of Decision 18.203.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

Progress in the implementation of Decision 18.203

3. In line with Decision 18.203 a) i), the Plants Committee, in collaboration with the Secretariat developed a questionnaire that was published in [Notification 2020/022](#) and its [Annex](#) on 11 March 2020. Responses were received from eight Parties: Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Germany, the Philippines, Switzerland, Thailand and the United States of America. These can be found in the Annex to the present document and are further summarized below.

Findings

4. Regarding artificially propagated specimens (paragraphs 1-4 of Resolution Conf. 16.10):
 - a) most of the seeds or propagules for cultivation of agarwood-producing species were obtained from parental stock grown at home gardens or plantations, which is non-detrimental to wild populations. Agarwood producing specimens are individually, state, or company-owned, and either grown in mono-species or mixed-species systems;
 - b) Thailand and China believe that the definitions of “*under controlled conditions*” in paragraph 2 of Resolution Conf. 16.10 and “*artificial propagation*” in paragraph 3 of Resolution Conf. 16.10 are useful for regulating non-detrimental management and trade in agarwood products. On the contrary, Bhutan states that the two definitions are not useful; and
 - c) exporting countries suggest that, due to its unclear definition, and due to the need of human intervention at almost all stages of agarwood production, the newly introduced term “assisted production” in Resolution Conf 11.11 (Rev. CoP18) on *Regulation of trade in plants* could not replace the definition of “*artificial propagation*” in Resolution Conf. 16.10. In contrast, importing countries (the United States of America and Germany) consider the term assisted production as a potential replacement of the current definition of “artificial propagation” in Resolution Conf. 16.10.
5. Regarding non-detriment findings (NDFs) (paragraphs 5-6 of Resolution Conf. 16.10): Among the responding Parties, no Party states to use the Agarwood NDF guidance. Exporting countries state the lack of data, such as population data. In addition, the collection of wild agarwood is prohibited in China. Importing countries believe that the NDF guidance could be amended, for example to provide additional or updated information, and support in dealing with information gaps. They therefore suggest to update the guidance.
6. Regarding management and trade control (paragraphs 7-9 of Resolution Conf. 16.10):
 - a) among the responding Parties, Thailand is the only country that implements a national agarwood registration system since 2017 as part of the implementation of Resolution Conf. 16.10. The regulation involves the growth under controlled conditions and legal acquisition of parental stock from private or state lands, which are not controlled by the state/Royal Forest Department. Thailand also registers the geographic origin of agarwood products.
 - b) The glossary is seen as lacking clarity. Some definitions are considered unclear, including wood pieces, chips, log, blocks. Moreover, Parties have difficulties to differentiate between oil from the wild and cultivated sources, and between exhausted and non-exhausted powder (whose smell is considered to be the same).

Recommendations

7. The Plants Committee is invited to note the progress in the implementation of Decision 18.203, and to establish an intersessional working group on agarwood-producing taxa to:
 - a) review the responses to [Notification 2020/022](#) and the findings as contained in paragraphs 4 to 6 of the present document and its Annex;
 - b) discuss the availability and sources of data, and the methodology of the assessment on potential conservation impacts to the long-term survival of agarwood-producing species and possible problems arising from the implementation of Resolution Conf. 16.10 on *Implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa*;

- c) formulate recommendations regarding the implementation of and potential amendments to Resolution Conf. 16.10 on *Implementation of the Convention for agarwood-producing taxa*, as well as the Agarwood glossary and the Agarwood NDF guidance and advise on the need for a study to further assess impacts of harvest, management and trade in agarwood products on the conservation of agarwood- producing species in the wild; and
- d) report the outcomes of its work to the Plants Committee for consideration at its 26th meeting.