

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



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Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME OF USE OF *CAIMAN CROCODILUS* IN COLOMBIA

This information document has been submitted by the CITES Management Authority of Colombia in relation to the agenda item 41 on *Implementation of the Convention relating to captive-bred and ranched specimens*.

Since 2011, from the document presented by the European Union SC61 Doc.27, there has been a constant revision of the topic of trade of specimens declared as raised in captivity and in farms in Colombia.

It is important to keep in mind that the Working Group established for the revision of this topic proposed fourteen (14) examples in Document SC62 Doc.26 noting that: “[T]he examples cited below were not thoroughly researched by the working group and are not considered to be confirmed areas where there is improper implementation of CITES; rather, they are examples that may warrant further examination.”

In 2013, the 16th CoP adopted decisions 16.63 and 16.66, mandating the Secretariat to contract the valuation of the concerns about the fourteen (14) examples in SC62 Doc. 26, Annex, including the identification of CITES implementation problems associated to these examples. The Secretariat chose to contract TRAFFIC as the expert to carry out the evaluation of all fourteen cases, which presented its results in the AC27 Doc.17 (Rev. 1).

It is worth mentioning that document AC27 Doc.17 (Rev. 1) mentions, in relation with “**Example 13: Brown Caiman *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* skins from Colombia traded using source code C**”, that “*Due to time restraints, Colombian CITES authorities were not contacted as part of this project*”. In general, this document contains imprecise information and erroneous interpretations, and it is completely based on indirect information from different documents produced by the Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) of the SSC and IUCN, without direct verification in Colombia with the CITES Management Authority (M.A).

The final information on the revision of the document generated by TRAFFIC by the working group conformed during the 27th A.C can be found in the AC28 Doc. 13.2, which was discussed during the 28th A.C in September of 2015. As a result, the A.C adopted the recommendations contained in the document AC28 Com. 5 (Rev. by Sec.). As a main recommendation, it is important to mention a proposal at the 66 S.C, to draft a new resolution which addresses the matters related to compliance of CITES for specimens declared to be raised in captivity. In this sense, in Annex 1 of document AC28 Com. 5 (Rev. by Sec.) there is a provisional text for said Resolution which contains a description of the proposed process. This Resolution must be considered by the S.C. at its 66th meeting.

CONCERNS

According to the mandate from CoP16, in decisions 16.63 and 16.66, the orientation of the work mandated to the Secretariat and executed by TRAFFIC was directed towards:

- a) *contingent on the availability of external funds, contract an appropriate expert or experts to:*
- i) *evaluate the concerns identified in the examples in document SC62 Doc.*

26, Annex, regarding trade in specimens claimed to be derived from captive breeding or ranching; ii) review CITES annual report data for specimens recorded using source codes C, D, F and R; iii) identify problems with CITES implementation associated with these examples. In this sense, the M.A of Colombia manifests its concern about the fact that the information contained in the report, regarding which Colombia has already expressed its observations, is being used to show in a reiterated fashion an alleged non-compliance of the Convention by Colombia.

Colombia considers that it is fundamental to always apply the provisions of CITES in order to avoid illegal traffic of threatened species, and especially the CITES compliance procedure established in resolution Conf. 14.3. Likewise, under the CITES framework Parties are currently considering to establish a compliance mechanism to deal specifically with matters related to the commerce of captive-bred and ranched specimens (Document AC28 Com. 5 Annex 1). Thus, this proposal, which may be adopted this year by the Conference of the Parties, will be the appropriate scenario to deal with such matters. In any case, in the event that Parties consider applying stricter domestic measures, it is essential to apply resolution Conf. 6.7 about this matter.

PROPOSALS

Colombia considers that it is of great importance that during the 66 P.C the Parties examine, adopt and put to consideration the approval of the mechanism proposed in the Document AC28 Com. 5 Annex 1, regarding actions relating to the commerce of specimens declared as raised in captivity or farms, in preparation for CoP17.

Taking into consideration the concerns about the captive breeding program of *Caiman crocodilus* in Colombia, and aware of the need of first-hand information, Colombia considers that it is important to show the work plan adopted by Colombia from beginning of 2014 and the advances that have been made to date. The main objective to establish a program in a combined model (mixed cycle according to what is established by Colombian Law 611 of 2000), using the current model of captive breeding along with a ranching program. This will elevate the value of conservation of the use of the species and will serve to the means of subsistence of the local communities that live in the area of distribution of the species.

BACKGROUND

Historically, Colombia has exploited the crocodilus species to the point where many of them have bordered extinction, which is the reason why the hunting of these species was prohibited, resulting in the recuperation of various wild populations.

In the 80's, Colombia became Party of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and established a model for the exploitation of *Caiman crocodilus* through captive breeding in closed cycle farms (development of the entire productive cycle in a controlled environment and using wild populations only to acquire the parental).

In 1993, Law 99, which sets the general framework for environmental law in Colombia was issued. This law includes the obligation to obtain an Environmental License as an instrument for the Regional Environmental Authorities to be able to have an environmental management, control and follow-up of farms with *Caiman crocodilus*, as well as to verify the traceability of the origin of the specimens from captive breeding so it can be commercialized, all of which is authorized by slots of exploitation.

In this same line, since 2004, Colombia established that parentals that are in the *Caiman crocodilus* farms must be marked with microchips, which is verified in the framework of control procedures and tracing of the environmental license for the giving of the slots that are available.

Based on the slots of exploitation given to each farm after their formal request, the CITES M.A assigns seals for the mobilization of skins and proceeds to give out the permits for export. This procedure is certified in the framework of the norms of Quality Control ISO 9000 and ISO 9001.

Since 2007, Colombia imposed the measure of marking all specimens at birth with a cut in the scale of the 10th caudal whorl, and requested that the CITES Secretariat inform the Parties through Notification No. 2014/033 that from this date on no permits would be issued for exports if they did not comply with this marking system. This was currently replaced by Notification No. 2015/064, which included a guide for the CITES Control Authorities (prepared in collaboration with the CSG of the IUCN) to facilitate identification of the scar so as to not confuse scars made on new born specimens as opposed to making the mark on a grown specimen post mortem.

With the implementation of this measure, there is no longer preoccupation on complying with the previous measure of restraining skins larger than 125 cm of longitude that Colombia had auto imposed. Now we have the guarantee of the scar identification proving their captive breeding.

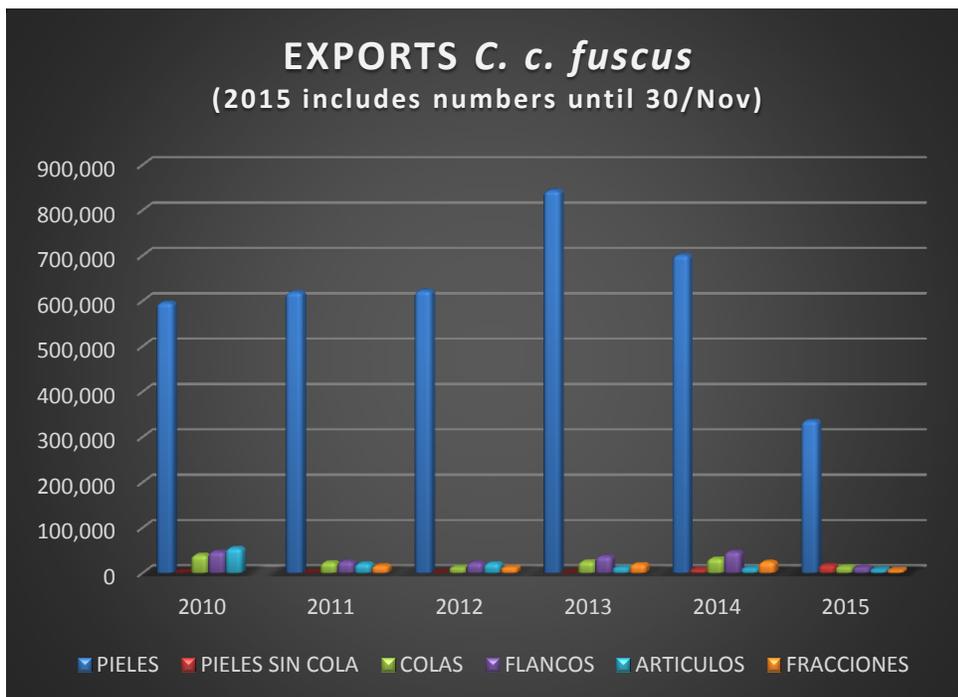
In 2010, the Colombia M.A expedited the Resolution No. 1740, implementing the certification of inspection of the shipments of the species *C. crocodilus* for export, by one of the independent or Type 'A' inspection organisms, properly accredited by the norm ISO/IEC 17020 of the National Accreditation Organism of Colombia (ONAC), within the national subsystem of quality, as support for the traceability of the cut in the scale of the 10th caudal whorl.

With these measures, in relation to the farms that have achieved technological advances for the production of high quality skins and that have begun to compete with skins from classic markets, a related industry has surfaced, composed of tanneries, manufacturing and specialized commercialization regarding all products derived from the production chain.

Composition of productive chain from *Caiman crocodilus*:

| FARMS | TANNERIES | MANUFACTURERS | TRADING |
|-------|-----------|---------------|---------|
| 44 | 9 | 14 | 19 |

Due to this, Colombia in average has sacrificed yearly around 600.000 animals for the trade of their skins in different states and product, whose exports in the last five years can be seen in the following graphic:



It's worth mentioning that the exports of 2013 and 2014 include 172.576 skins of bigger specimens, originating from the sacrifice of parentals that were replaced with animals of the same production of the farms, and include skins of animals produced before 2007 that surpassed the 125 cm mark and hadn't been apt for commerce due to the restriction of that time.

During 2014, the CITES M.A of Colombia evaluated forty four (44) existing closed cycle breeding establishments of *Caiman crocodilus*, and as a result, eight (8) of them had

evident faults in compliance with the requisites demanded by law for the breeding of this species, and their CITES permits were suspended for exports.

Looking to strengthen the management, control and tracing model regarding the licenses of the farms of captive breeding of *Caiman crocodilus*, the competence was given directly to the National Authority of Environmental Licenses (ANLA) by means of Decree 2041 of 2014.

In order for the ANLA to be more efficient in their work of control and tracing of these establishments, in the first trimester of 2016, there will be an endowment of an observation mechanism, based on a system of criteria and indicators that will allow the assessment of the true capacity of production of these farms of closed cycle breeding. The design of this system has been developed throughout 2015 by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development in collaboration with the ANLA, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute (part of the CITES S.A) and the scientific advisors to the producers.

For some time now, the CITES M.A of Colombia has been working through the development of workshops and training of its entities of support and police body, in the application of the Convention on a national level and in relation to the commerce of *Caiman crocodilus*. The focus has been mainly on recognition of skins and the measure imposed regarding the cut in the scale of the 10th caudal whorl in the specimens produced in farms for captive breeding.

In response to the need to improve the tools of control and tracing, specific to *Caiman crocodilus*, within the measures that already exist for the control of mobilization and commerce of species of fauna, Resolutions No. 2651 and 2652 of 2015 have been expedited. These establish the mechanisms for the control and tracing by the CITES M.A of Colombia, regarding the skins that are object of cutting and those that are parts or fractions of skins at the moment of export in the shipping port.

In this sense, during the 28th A.C, Colombia took part and will support the initiative that is being worked on for the generation of a mechanism of traceability of skins of reptiles, which will yield a mechanism that allows the tracing of the skins from when the animal is captured in the wild or produced by captive breeding, until when their skin is a manufactured product.

MIXED CYCLE

In the beginning of 2015, an agreement was signed between the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development as the CITES M.A and the Institute of Sciences of the National University of Colombia (part of the CITES S.A), so that between 2015 and March 2016, the base line for information regarding biological

aspects of the species would be completed, as well as structure and dynamics of its populations, as well as the social aspects related to wild species, all directed to implement the alternative model of use of part of *Caiman crocodilus*. This will take place in four locations: 2 zones in Mompós, Municipalities of Magangué and Barranco de Loba, and in swamps of Guajaro and Luruaco.

Parting from the base line of the obtained information from the investigation strategy, and based on the non-detrimental findings according to Resolution Conf. 16.7, we will be able to fix a **first experimental quota of ranching** in the **first half of 2016**, to **initiate** a mixed model between captive breeding and direct management of the species by local communities.

On this model of use of the species, we have already developed various experimental initiatives with good results in the zones of Canal del Dique, Bolívar, complex of swamps in La Mojona, and the department of the Atlantic. These have served as a basis of information and demonstrative tools for the implementation of the model.

By means of an evaluation strategy and continuous tracing that will extend to the totality of the areas of distribution of the species, to follow up of the effects of the model, we can establish a scheme of adaptive management and yearly quotas of ranching that guarantee the sustainable use of the wild populations.

With the implementation of the mixed cycle, **approximately in 2017**, Colombia will be making its **first exports** originating from the new model of use of the species.