

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



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Species specific matters

QUEEN CONCH (*STROMBUS GIGAS*):
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.275 to 18.280 on *Queen conch* (*Strombus gigas*). The present document provides a report on the implementation of the Decisions on queen conch directed to the Standing Committee, specifically Decisions 18.275 [paragraphs e) and g)], 18.277 and 18.278, as follows:

18.275 Directed to Parties

The range States of Strombus gigas are encouraged to:

[...]

- e) *continue to collaborate in exploring ways to enhance the traceability of specimens of S. gigas in international trade, including, but not limited to, catch certificates, labelling systems and the application of genetic techniques, and consider sharing relevant experiences with the Secretariat, Parties and the Standing Committee, as appropriate, in the context of discussions on traceability systems for trade in CITES-listed species;*

[...]

- g) *make available to the Standing Committee, through the Secretariat, information concerning illegal trade in queen conch, including surveillance and enforcement activities, as appropriate;*

18.277 Directed to the Standing Committee

On the basis of reporting by the Secretariat in compliance with Decision 18.275, paragraphs e) and g), the Standing Committee shall review traceability, especially for meat, and enforcement issues concerning international trade in queen conch and make recommendations as appropriate.

18.278 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall continue to collaborate with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES working group on queen conch, WECAFC and other relevant international organizations, and, subject to external funding:

[...]

- b) *provide assistance to range States of S. gigas on relevant enforcement issues and report new developments in this regard to the Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

Implementation of Decision 18.275, paragraph e)

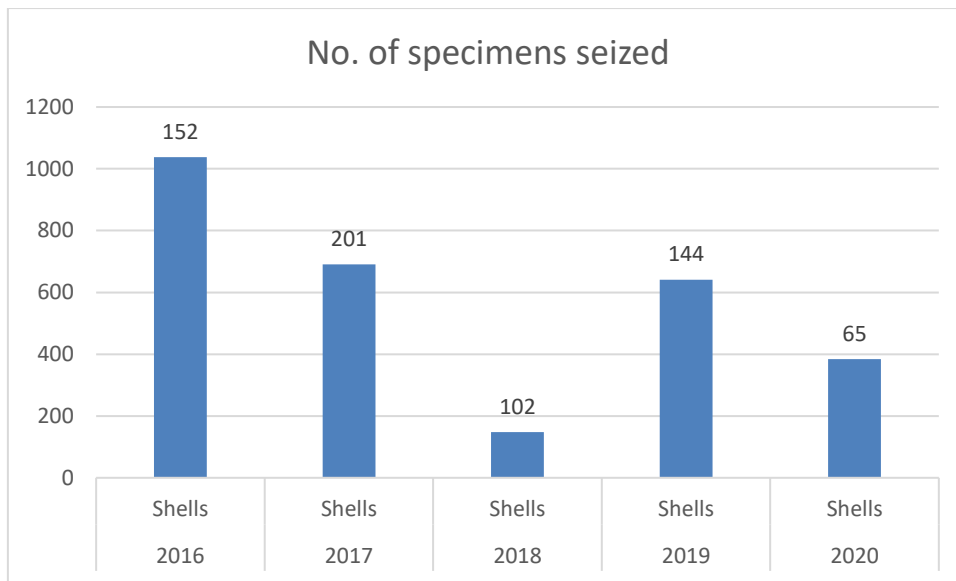
3. Concerning Decision 18.275, queen conch range States have not provided information on traceability issues or enforcement directly to the Secretariat. However, they have provided updates on the implementation status of “The Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan” to the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES working group on queen conch (QCWG). The Secretariat has continued to collaborate closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) through this working group. There have been two meetings of this working group since the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Geneva, 2019).
4. The Fourth meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico from 16 to 17 December 2019. The following countries and regional partner organizations participated: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the United States of America, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC), the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC), the International Regional Organization for Animal Health (OIRSA), and the Organization for Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Central American Isthmus (OSPESCA). The CITES Secretariat was unable to attend in person, but participated remotely. The report from the meeting can be accessed [here](#).
5. The Fifth meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES Working Group on Queen Conch was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico from 13 to 14 December 2021. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the Secretariat could not attend in person, but participated remotely. At the time of writing (January 2022), the report of the meeting was not available. However, the report will be available in sufficient time to allow the Secretariat to report on progress in the implementation of Decision 18.275 paragraphs a) to f) at the 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in compliance with Decision 18.280.

Implementation of Decision 18.275, paragraph g) and Decision 18.278 b)

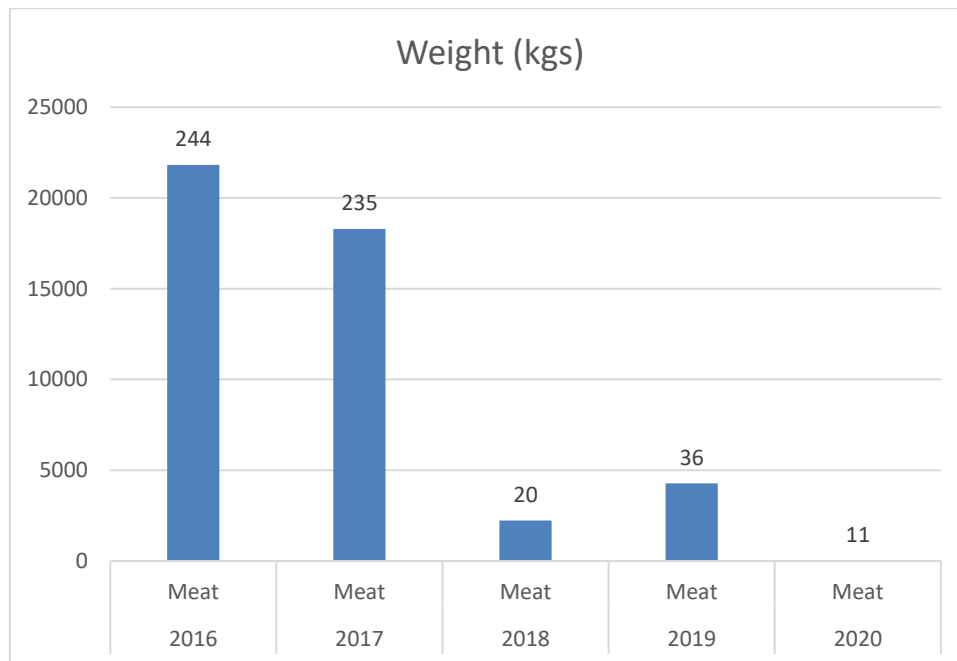
6. The level of illegal trade in queen conch as reported in the CITES illegal trade reports between 2016 and 2020 was analyzed based on data extracted in December 2021. The total number of seizures reported in 2016 was 412; 447 in 2017; 126 in 2018; 184 in 2019 and 82 in 2020. This is based on reports submitted by 31 Parties that had made seizures of queen conch. Where indicated, most shipments were by air or mail, with smaller numbers by boat. In many cases, the seizures were the result of joint operations with multiple agencies.
7. There is a large variation in the reporting units making it very difficult to make direct comparisons and analyses. The majority of seizures are in shells and meat, with one seizure of 35 pearls in 2016. Smaller number of seizures have been recorded as body (BOD), carapace (CAP), derivative (DER), extract (EXT), jewellery (JWL), oil (OIL), scientific specimen (SPE) and trophy (TRO). In some cases, codes that are not found in the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* are used, e.g. SPR, UNS, WHO. The breakdown of specimens recorded as either shells, meat or pearls, seized for each year is presented in the table below.

Year	Specimen	No. of seizures	No. of specimens	Weight (kgs)
2016	Shells	152	1038	
	Meat	244		21817.67
	Pearl	1	35	
2017	Shells	201	691	
	Meat	235		18293.67
2018	Shells	102	148	
	Meat	20		2228.665
2019	Shells	144	641	
	Meat	36		4282.608
2020	Shells	65	384	
	Meat	11		28.412

8. The following graph shows the number of shell specimens seized, where the unit indicated is number of shells. The annual number of seizures that this is based on is indicated at the top of each column. Additional shells that were seized, but recorded in kgs, were not included. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this data, without knowing the enforcement effort and noting that the COVID-19 global pandemic may have had an impact on levels of illegal trade in 2020. It would be preferable to include both the number of specimens and weight for future reporting on seizures of conch shells.



9. The following graph shows the volume of meat seized, where the unit is in kilograms. The annual number of seizures that this is based on is indicated at the top of each column. Although it appears from the graph that there were no seizures in 2020, a volume of 28.412 kg from 11 seizures was recorded. It is assumed that the meat consists of 100% clean fillet. However, conch meat is traded in various stages of processing (dirty meat, trimmings, clean fillets, etc.) and the data does not distinguish between the different products. The data suggests that there has been a declining trend in the number of seizures and the volume of meat being seized since 2016.



10. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this data, without knowing the enforcement effort and noting that the COVID-19 global pandemic may have had an impact on levels of illegal trade in 2020..

Additional information

11. The Secretariat would like to draw the Standing Committee's attention to a project entitled "Seizing the trade and business potential of Blue BioTrade products for promoting sustainable livelihoods and conservation of marine biodiversity in selected Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Countries" (Blue BioTrade Project). This project is funded by the OECS and the European Union under the Regional Integration Through Growth Harmonisation and Technology (RIGHT) project and implemented by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the OECS, with the CITES Secretariat acting in a technical advisory capacity.
12. UNCTAD defines BioTrade as "the activities of collection/production, transformation and commercialization of goods and services derived from native biodiversity under criteria of environmental, social and economic sustainability." The concept of "Blue BioTrade" focuses on marine-based products and services, and was launched by UNCTAD, the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the International Ocean Institute (IOI) at the United Nations Ocean Conference in 2017. The Blue BioTrade approach involves working across multiple levels of the value chain to develop sustainable livelihoods; adopt an ecosystem-based management approach; and foster swift adaptation to dynamic markets and changing ecological conditions. The overall objective of the project is to empower small-scale coastal producers from OECS member States to produce and trade in queen conch products in domestic, regional and international markets under the Blue BioTrade Principles and Criteria (environmental, social and economic sustainability), which includes CITES provisions concerning international trade in the species.
13. The Blue BioTrade Project on queen conch was officially launched on 7 October 2020 by UNCTAD, OECS and the CITES Secretariat. The 18-month initiative aims to empower small-scale coastal producers from the main queen conch producing nations in the eastern Caribbean, while ensuring sustainability. The beneficiary countries in this first phase are Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Case studies on the queen conch value chains in these beneficiary countries are being developed following an initial stakeholder mapping of the queen conch value chain in the three participating countries, and an initial scoping of opportunities and challenges that will be further explored to improve environmental and economic outcomes. The project is working towards the development of a Blue BioTrade Regional Action plan for the OECS, which will be discussed at a regional workshop that is scheduled to take place in May 2022. This action plan will make recommendations, many of which can be applied throughout the wider Caribbean region.

Implementation of Decision 18.277

14. Since the Secretariat has little to report in relation to compliance with Decision 18.275, paragraphs e) and g), the Standing Committee will not be able to review traceability issues concerning queen conch, especially for meat. In due course, the outputs from the BlueBioTrade Project may provide some useful recommendations in this regard. Parties have provided some information on illegal trade in queen conch through their annual illegal trade reports, which is summarized in the section above.

Implementation of Decision 18.278

15. As reported in paragraphs 3 to 5 above, the Secretariat continues to collaborate with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES working group on queen conch.
16. Funding has been secured from the Netherlands to support the implementation of Decision 18.278 and provide assistance to range States of *S. gigas* on relevant enforcement issues. The Secretariat notes that at the fifth meeting of the QCWG, a number of range States expressed an interest in taking part in a proposed study to look at genetic differentiation of queen conch across the region. Range States noted that this work could be important in their enforcement efforts and addressing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The Secretariat is investigating how the funds from the Netherlands could be used to initiate a first phase of this study in 2022 and contribute to the implementation of Decision 18.278.

Recommendations

17. The Standing Committee may wish to:
 - a) note the information contained in the document; and
 - b) remind Parties that the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report* in Annex 2 to Notification to the Parties No. 2021/044 indicate that shells should preferably be reported by number and that meat should be reported in kilograms.