

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of Corallium rubrum in Appendix II.

B. PROPONENT

The Kingdom of Spain.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Anthozoa
12. Order: Alcyonaria Octocorallia
13. Family: Gorgonacea
14. Species: Corallium rubrum
15. Common Names: English: precious red coral
French: corail rouge
Spanish: Coral rojo

16. Code Numbers:

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: The precious red coral occurs almost exclusively in the Mediterranean sea. Once it was very abundant in all the Mediterranean Basin.
22. Red coral fishery occurs specially in the Crete and Rhodes Islands (Greece), Sicily, Libyan Arab Jamaharyia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Corsica, Sardinia, etc.

In Spain, in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands important reefs have been traditionally exploited and recently, the exploitation of a very important reef has started in the vicinity of the Alboran Island (Spain).

23. Habitat: The precious red coral has a slow growth as usual in the extension of a colony of octocorallarian coelenterata. The growth speed varies between 2 to 5 mm, a year.

The red coral must fix on hard rocks exposed to submarine streams and where the environmental light is, of course, not intense. It can also develop in the almost total darkness of caves and holes.

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: The red coral has been exploited in the Mediterranean sea for a long time for use in jewelry.

In many Mediterranean countries small handicraft industries exist which dedicate themselves to the extraction of red coral by divers and the manufacture of jewels.

The situation of this fishery and, therefore, of the market has considerably changed with the introduction of machines like the "Italian bar" and the "St. Andrew Cross" for the red coral extraction.

In Spain, the coral fishery is regulated under an Orden Ministerial of 30 June 1965 which allows red coral collection by licensed divers in diving-suits. Under these regulations it is only possible to take coral branches of more than 8 mm at their basis, in order to prevent the degradation of growing specimens. Licences are granted for five years which are followed by twenty-five years of total ban to allow recovery of the resource. The take limit for each diver is 200 kg a year.

By the end of 1983, however, the appearance in the waters under Spanish jurisdiction, in the vicinity of Alboran Island, of coralling boats with foreign flags equipped with dragging equipment obliged the Spanish administration to grant to four Spanish boats based in Adra and Alemeria (Almeria Province) licences for coral fishery with the same kind of material. The authorization was provisional and for investigation purposes in order to protect national interests. In June 1984, a new decree regulating the coral fishery was enacted on the basis of these new conditions.

In May 1982, the Instituto Española de Oceanografía was charged by the Spanish Government to conduct an investigation programme on the red coral. Following the conclusions of this programme which were opposed to dragging as extraction system of the red coral, the Spanish Government decided, in September 1986, not to renew any licence for the extraction of coral by means of dragging tools, and to limit again the extraction to divers in waters under Spanish jurisdiction.

In the meantime, in December 1983, during the FAO technical consultation on red coral, it was admitted that the four coral fishing areas in the Spanish Mediterranean Sea (Costa Brava, Balearic, Columbretes and Almeria) were over-exploited, that a better control of illegal collecting was desirable and that the use of non-selective techniques is aggravating the situation.

In Italy, a big producer country of red coral until its resources were considerably depleted due to the use of dragging equipment such as the bar or the "St. Andrew cross" and the proliferation of professional and amateur divers, the main manufacturing and trade centre of red coral exists in Torre del Greco, near Napoli. The coral dragging technique originated also in this country and Italian coralling boats have been encountered taking coral without licences within the waters of other countries, Spain among others.

In France, coral extraction is regulated and controlled by the Préfectures Maritimes of the regions where this type of activity is occurring. There is no information on the use of dragging equipment. Until recent years, in Corsica, a non-selective and

very primitive tool, known as Saint André, was used. It has apparently been abandoned, red coral extraction by divers being the only form of exploitation in this country.

32. Legal International Trade: Between 1984 and 1986, 28,892,100 kg of red coral were exported from Spain to Italy as follows:

1984: 10,168,200 kg
1985: 11,909,900 kg
1986: 6,814,000 kg

Exports from Spain should be smaller from 1987 as the extraction by dragging was stopped. However, the difficulties of controlling activities taking place on the high sea, as well as the possible continuation of the dragging of red coral in other areas of the Mediterranean sea and the need to better know the exploitation of such a resource by divers, is one for the basic reasons for this proposal.

33. Illegal Trade: In spring 1983, various Italian boats were detained by Spanish patrols because they were taking red coral without licences in the waters surrounding the Alboran Island. Similar events occurred in the waters of other countries such as the Libyan Arab Jamaharyia and Tunisia.

It is the presence of such foreign boats which motivated the authorization, for experimental and scientific investigation purposes, to grant four licences to Spanish boats between 1983 and 1986.

During this period it also appeared difficult to control coralling activities, and speculations were made on the permanent presence of coralling boats without the necessary licences. The best way to put an end to these speculations or to verify them is to regulate the international trade in red coral through the inclusion of this species in CITES Appendix II.

34. Potential Trade Threats: While red coral extraction by divers using picks, and made in full accordance with the regulations which provide for the conservation of the resource, is very infrequently damaging in the whole Mediterranean Basin because it allows the selective taking of coral branches in leaving the basis and allowing the regeneration and regrowing of the colony, it does not cause any damage to the rest of the marine ecosystem and it permits the maintenance in a virtually undisturbed state of the coral colonies which are at a depth far from those reached by divers, the introduction of dragging equipment for coral extraction has a serious impact on the ecosystem as reflected in the findings of the investigation of the Instituto Español de Oceanografía.

To drag the coral a cylinder of up to six metres and of about forty centimetres in diameter is used. Its weight might be over one tonne. Chains of about 5 metres are fixed on the bar and they bear catchers or nets in which the coral broken by the bar is collected.

This equipment is pulled by a boat on the sea bed, where it breaks and drags the coral branches, as well as the other flora and fauna of the sea bed. Only 20% to 40% of the coral is recovered in the nets. The rest is lost and dies on the sea bed.

The impact is not only that of the damage caused to the coral colonies, but also to the other organisms which live on the sea bottom (algae, invertebrates, fish and mollusc eggs, among others).

Due to its destructive effects, the use of dragging equipment has been prohibited in many countries (France, Morocco, Spain, ...), but such measures are not sufficient to eliminate it.

The use of dragging equipment and other similar means, in addition to the pressure exerted by the divers, has generated in Italy the quasi extinction of the coral resource of this country in very few years.

35. Definition: The dead coral, used in low quality jewelry, and the live coral, with more value, are both exploited and traded through the same channels.

Therefore, this proposal refers to the inclusion of the dead and live red coral in CITES Appendix II.

4. Protection Status

41. National: In the whole Mediterranean Basin, as well as in Spain, the red coral is considered as an exploitable resource under certain conditions and the strict compliance of established fishery and conservation regulations.

As the extraction of red coral is a small scale activity when it is carried out by divers, but which has a very worrying environmental effect when the extraction is conducted using the dragging equipment, we believe that it is convenient that the existing national regulations be completed by the regulation of the international trade in products from this exploitation.

42. International: The red coral is not listed in any CITES appendix.

43. Additional Protection Needs: The existing data on international trade in red coral are insufficient. During the FAO Technical Consultation on the red coral, in December 1983, it was advised that several red coral colonies of the Mediterranean Sea were subject to over-exploitation.

The existing national regulations have to be complemented by strict control and monitoring of international trade as well as by the creation of marine parks and better protection against marine pollution.

5. Information on Similar Species

Several Parties have expressed the view that all coral species should be listed in CITES Appendix II. The Spanish delegation shares this point of view.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

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7. Additional Remarks

This proposal is submitted on the basis of Article II, paragraph 2(a), of the Convention.

8. References

