

- A. Proposal: Transfer of the Indonesian population of Scleropages formosus from Appendix I to Appendix II, with a desired quota of 2,500 for export.
- B. Proponent: The Republic of Indonesia
- C. Supporting statement:

1. Taxonomy

- 1.1 Class: Pisces
- 1.2 Order: Osteoglossiformes
- 1.3 Family: Osteoglossidae
- 1.4 Species: Scleropages formosus
- 1.5 Common names:
- English: Asian Bonytongue, Asian Arowana
- French: Scleropage d'Asie
- Spanish: Pez lenguihueso malayo
- Indonesian: Ikan siluk, ikan khayangan, ikan tanokelam
- 1.6 Codo Number:

2. Biological data:

2.1 Distribution: Scleropages formosus is known to occur from a wide geographic region that includes Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam. In Indonesia, Scleropages formosus is distributed in the lower reaches of the rivers in Sumatra, Bangka and Kalimantan. In Sumatra, it is known from such rivers as Kampar, Siak Kecil, Rokan in the Riau province and from the Kerinci lake in the province of Jambi. In Kalimantan, it is known from the Kapuas and Landak rivers.

2.2 Population: There has been to date no detailed surveys carried out to determine the population size of Scleropages formosus given the wide geographic distribution. It is however estimated that at least 20,000 animals are taken annually from West Kalimantan populations alone. The main fishing locations in West Kalimantan are in the Sintang and Kapuas Hulu regions. It was widely believed that the species was likely to be abundant in the extensive swamps of West and South Kalimantan and also in the swamps in North Sumatra.

2.3 Habitat: Most of the Scleropages formosus habitats are located within conservation areas, e.g: Danau Pulau Besar and Danau Bawah Game Reserves (Riau Province in Sumatra), Gunung Kerinci Nature Reserve, Bukit Tapan Nature Reserve, and Merangin Mejunto Game Reserve (Jambi Province in Sumatra). The species inhabits lakes, swamps, flooded forests and slow moving streams and rivers. It is found in waters that are slightly acidic. The substrate is fine grained sand without stone or gravel. Tall trees usually border the rivers. The fish inhabits waters 2-3 m deep, preferring to remain hidden among the vegetation during the day and surface in the night to swim along the open channels.

Scleropages formosus has a varied diet that includes among others, terrestrial insects, arachnids, non-woody roots and tubers.

3. Trade data:

3.1 National utilization: Scleropages formosus has been protected since 1980 by the Decree of the Minister of Agriculture No: 716/Kpts/Um/10/1980 according to which no private taking, possession and trade of this species is allowed except for scientific research. In the past, such fish were consumed by local people. However, with the Chinese community regarding this fish as a symbol of fortune, its exploitation has been rife.

3.2 International trade: In 1982, according to TRAFFIC Reports, Japan alone imported at least 2,000 Scleropages fish from Indonesia. These were registered as "captive bred". Since there has been no record of successful breeding in captivity of this species in Indonesia, this claim cannot be true. The only country where this fish has been bred in captivity successfully is Singapore where in 1981, the Green Arowana was bred.

3.3 Illegal trade: It appears that illegal trade in this fish might have commenced in 1970 and has been increasing significantly over the past four years. The trade has become illegal since the total ban was imposed in 1980. The Indonesian Management Authority has received several offers from Hong Kong to return the specimens that were confiscated. Unfortunately, these could not be retrieved by Indonesia for want of funds. The suspected smuggling routes to other countries from Indonesia go through Pontianak in Kalimantan and Medan and/or Pekanbaru in Sumatra. It should be noted that during the period of August to December 1985, 772 specimens were confiscated in 31 raids along Pontianak and Tanjung Pandang-Jakarta route. The sea routes are more difficult to detect or control.

3.4 Potential trade threat:

3.4.1 Live Specimens: Most of the trade is in live specimens. High mortality of the specimens in transit is due largely to poor maintenance of the animals. It is estimated that about 20% of the specimens taken illegally die before they reach their destination. The preference shown to certain coloured specimens e.g: Red Arowana is thought to be responsible for the reduction in numbers.

3.4.2 Parts and derivatives: There has been no record of any trade in dead specimens. However, there is local consumption of the fish.

4. Protection status:

4.1 National: As the species is protected in Indonesia since 1980, there is a total ban that prohibits its possession, trade and transport without a special permit from the Ministry of Forestry which is given only for scientific purposes.

Several areas where this species occurs have already been declared conservation areas e.g: Danau Pulau Besar and Danau Bawah Game Reserve in Riau Province in Sumatra, Gunung Kerinci and Bukit Tapan Nature Reserves, and the Merangin Majunto Game Reserve in Jambi Province in Sumatra. Among other measures that have been taken to regulate the utilization of this species is the breeding of the species in captivity. There are 3 basic rules that must be followed:-

1. Maximum size of the fish taken from the wild to form the parental stock must not exceed 30 cm.
2. Only animals bred in captivity may be traded.
3. 10% of the reared animals must be released in to the natural habitats.

So far efforts to breed the animals in captivity have only been marginally successful. Research on breeding biology and behaviour is being carried out by several scientific agencies.

4.2 International: Indonesia has modified its conservation efforts to comply with the CITES regulations and has enacted the necessary legislation to provide total protection of the species in keeping with its status as an Appendix I species. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals lists Scleropages formosus as a taxon that is suspected but not definitely known to belong to any other categories because of lack of information. (K-status).

5. Additional remarks:

The proponent wishes to down list the Scleropages formosus from its current position in Appendix I to Appendix II with the proviso that a quota of 2,500 be given to Indonesia to be traded internationally for the following reasons:-

1. The species was put in Appendix I in the first place to avoid further exploitation in the wild.
2. There is still uncertainty about the population size as indicated by its status in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals.
3. Illegal harvests from the wild still go on and the fact that large numbers are being taken indicates that the wild population may be able to withstand a certain degree of harvest.
4. Several habitats of the species are already protected under the country's network of protected areas such as Game Reserves and Nature Reserves.
5. A limited but controlled harvest of the species through its downlisting to Appendix II may provide the mechanism to reduce the on going, uncontrolled illegal harvests leading to high mortality among the fish.

6. If the species down listed to Appendix II from Appendix I, it may have the following benefits:-

i: captive breeding programmes may provide specimens for release into impoverished habitats within the range of the species.

ii: trade in captive bred specimens will provide economic benefit to local people

iii: Progeny from the captive bred progeny will allow for better control of permits for the importing countries.