

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

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Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Gigiri (Kenya), 10-20 April 2000

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

UNIVERSAL LABELLING SYSTEM FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF STURGEON SPECIMENS (CAVIAR)

1. This document was prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of a document and draft resolution developed by a working group of the Animals Committee.

Introduction

2. All species of sturgeon and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes) are included in Appendix I or II of CITES. In recent years, poaching of and illegal trade in sturgeon caviar have adversely affected the status of sturgeon species in the wild. Resolution Conf. 10.12, on the conservation of sturgeons, recommends that the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals Committee, explore the development of a uniform marking system for sturgeon parts and derivatives and aquaculture stocks to assist in the identification of the species. The resolution recommends that this marking system be developed in consultation with appropriate experts in fisheries, aquaculture and industry and in collaboration with range States.
3. A working group was created at the 14th meeting of the Animals Committee (Caracas, Venezuela, 25 to 29 May 1998) to draft recommendations for the creation of a universal marking system for sturgeon. The Animals Committee at its 15th meeting (Antananarivo, Madagascar, 5 to 9 July 1999) considered the document drafted by this working group. The working group recommended the establishment of a mandatory tagging programme for whole fish legally caught in the Caspian and Azov Sea regions. The working group also made a recommendation for tagging sturgeon meat and caviar in domestic and international trade with non-reusable labels each containing shipment-specific information.
4. The members of the working group present at the 15th meeting of the Animals Committee were the United States (Chairman), China, Germany, Iran, the Russian Federation, TRAFFIC International, World Conservation Trust (IWMC), and the International Caviar Importers Association (ICIA). The Animals Committee discussed the draft document on sturgeon marking produced by the working group and concluded that marking entire fishes was unrealistic and that it would initially be more feasible to develop a marking system for caviar only. The Animals Committee further recognized that a marking system should be recommended for the export of caviar from producing countries (primary exporting countries) to the first importing country. The requirements for such a marking system are addressed in the draft resolution annexed to the present document. It was also recognized that a number of the producing countries already implement a labelling system for caviar and the proposed universal marking requirements do not differ greatly from those systems already in place.
5. The working group recognized that additional work will be needed in future to address the marking of stocks derived from aquaculture as well as wild harvest. In addition, future discussions will need to focus on a system for labelling caviar for re-export and, where appropriate, domestic use.

Discussion

6. The Secretariat appreciates the work done by the working group of the Animals Committee on this matter and supports the principle of a uniform marking system for caviar.

7. The working group advocates applying appropriately-coded, non-reusable labels to “primary containers” containing more than 50g of caviar that enter international trade. The minimum amount of 50g has been selected as this quantity represents the smallest contained amount of processed caviar that enters trade. Use of the proposed marking system would therefore apply to all primary containers of caviar of more than 50g. According to the Secretariat's interpretation, the working group further recommended that all exports of caviar in quantities more than 50g from producing countries be marked to indicate the grade, species code, country of origin, year of harvest, processing plant number and unique lot identification number (e.g. Beluga/HUS/RU/2000/xxxxyyyy). There is no requirement, however, for any labelling of caviar repackaged in importing countries even if this material is destined for re-export. The labelling system proposed by the working group therefore places a considerable obligation on producing countries but none on others, and may not prevent the laundering of illegally traded caviar in re-packaged format or the re-export of such material.
8. The Secretariat believes furthermore that a universal marking system is most relevant to commercial or bulk exports of caviar (i.e. in quantities in excess of the 250g limit recommended for the personal effects exemption in Resolution Conf. 10.12) regardless of the type or size of container used. Any amount exported or re-exported, including repackaged caviar, in one shipment in excess of 250g should accordingly be marked.
9. The proposal from the working group of the Animals Committee, which also took account of written comments from China, Germany and the IWMC, formed the basis for the attached draft resolution prepared by the Secretariat.

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Universal labelling system for the identification of sturgeon specimens (caviar)

AWARE that all species of sturgeon and paddlefish (*Acipenseriformes*) are listed in Appendix I or II of CITES, but concerned that certain parts and derivatives of some sturgeon species may be subject to some levels of illegal trade;

RECOGNIZING that illegal trade threatens the survival of certain populations of sturgeons and undermines the efforts of producer countries to manage their sturgeon resources on a sustainable basis;

RECOGNIZING that Resolution Conf. 10.12 adopted at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Harare, 1997) recommended that the Secretariat in consultation with the Animals Committee explore the development of a uniform marking system for sturgeon parts and derivatives to assist in the identification of the species;

RECALLING that Article VI, paragraph 7, of the Convention provides that specimens of species listed in the appendices may be marked to assist in identifying them;

NOTING that, in order to assist the Parties in identifying legal caviar in trade, marking should be standardized and that particular specifications for the design of labels are fundamental and should be generally applied;

NOTING FURTHER that Resolution Conf. 10.12, paragraph e) recommends that exemptions for personal effects be limited to 250g caviar and;

CONSIDERING that the marking of all caviar in international trade would be an important step towards the effective regulation of international trade in sturgeon specimens;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

RECOMMENDS:

- a) the introduction of a uniform marking system for any container or consignment of more than 250g of caviar entering international trade based on the application of non-reusable labels on each primary container;
- b) that the non-reusable label include: grade of the caviar; a standard three letter species code (provided in Annex 1); the two-letter ISO code for the country of origin; the year of harvest; and a unique number derived from, for example, the processing plant and lot identification number for the caviar), for example in the form:

Beluga/HUS/RU/2000/xxxxyyyy

- c) that, in order to facilitate monitoring of caviar exports, the same information that is provided on the label be included on the export permit or re-export certificate; and
- d) that Parties accept shipments of caviar only if they are accompanied by appropriate documents containing the information referred to in paragraph b) and c), and if the related processed products are labelled as recommended in this Resolution;

URGES Parties to establish a system of registration or licensing, or both, for importers, exporters and re-exporters of caviar; and

DIRECTS the Secretariat to monitor the implementation of the universal marking system and report deficiencies of the system to the Conference of the Parties.

## Annex

## CODES FOR IDENTIFICATION OF ACIPENSERIFORMES SPECIES

Species	Code
<i>Acipenser baerii</i>	BAE
<i>Acipenser baerii baicalensis</i>	BAI
<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	BRE
<i>Acipenser dabryanus</i>	DAB
<i>Acipenser fulvescens</i>	FUL
<i>Acipenser gueldenstaedtii</i>	GUE
<i>Acipenser medirostris</i>	MED
<i>Acipenser mikadoi</i>	MIK
<i>Acipenser naccarii</i>	NAC
<i>Acipenser nudiventris</i>	NUD
<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>	OXY
<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi</i>	DES
<i>Acipenser persicus</i>	PER
<i>Acipenser ruthenus</i>	RUT
<i>Acipenser schrencki</i>	SCH
<i>Acipenser sinensis</i>	SIN
<i>Acipenser stellatus</i>	STE
<i>Acipenser sturio</i>	STU
<i>Acipenser transmontanus</i>	TRA
<i>Huso dauricus</i>	DAU
<i>Huso huso</i>	HUS
<i>Polyodon spathula</i>	SPA
<i>Psephurus gladius</i>	GLA
<i>Pseudoscaphirhynchus fedtschenkoi</i>	FED
<i>Pseudoscaphirhynchus hermanni</i>	HER
<i>Pseudoscaphirhynchus kaufmanni</i>	KAU
<i>Acaphirhynchus platyrhynchus</i>	PLA
<i>Scaphirhynchus albus</i>	ALB
<i>Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus</i>	PLT
<i>Scaphirhynchus suttkus</i>	SUT