

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Geneva (Switzerland), 17-28 August 2019

DOCUMENTING TRADE IN CITES-LISTED MARINE SPECIES

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in relation to agenda item 63, 67, 68, 72 and 85.\*

**Background**

2. Successful implementation of management of marine resources (fish and invertebrates) to ensure their sustainable use and the functioning of marine ecosystems depends partially on having information on exploitation and trade; species listed on CITES Appendix I, II and III are no exception. Various processes under CITES, including e.g. the formulation of Non Detriment Findings or the Review of Significant Trade benefit from access to trade data that is submitted by CITES Parties. Ensuring there is transparent access to reliable data on shifting trends in international trade of CITES listed species, and ensuring that data is up-to-date and reflects international trade flows is a joint aim of UN FAO, UNEP-WCMC and the CITES Secretariat.

**Analyzing trade in CITES-listed marine species — what will it tell us?**

3. Between CITES CoP17 and CoP18 multiple instances were discussed in CITES fora where the data on international trade in CITES-listed species recorded in the CITES trade database did not match experts' expectations. Questions of the spatial and temporal accuracy of data and suggestions that there may be information gaps raises questions on both the perceptions of experts and the CITES trade data – and more importantly, the reasons for the mismatch?
4. There are many unique challenges and potential solutions to reporting trade in CITES-listed marine taxa to CITES. To begin to answer some of these questions FAO and UNEP-WCMC (with cooperation from the CITES Secretariat and members of IUCN species specialist groups) have been working together to provide a clearer picture, concentrating on international trade in CITES Appendix II marine taxa currently included in the CITES Trade Database (based on CITES Parties' annual reports).
5. The report currently in preparation, entitled 'CITES and the Sea', will provide an up-to-date comprehensive overview of how patterns of trade in these species have varied over space and time, where possible, and using expert knowledge to draw on other data sets to verify the plausibility of those findings. The report, which will be published in the last quarter of 2019, also will also present recommendations to make marine trade data collection and reporting more efficient and robust.

**Strengthening CITES trade reporting for marine species**

6. There is great value in recognizing and supporting the efforts of CITES Parties to improve the reporting of trade in CITES Appendix I, II and III listed species. FAO, UNEP-WCMC, the CITES Secretariat and members

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\* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

of IUCN species specialist groups that are helping to write this report are seeking input from both Parties and marine taxon experts who wish to assist in providing input to the 'CITES and the Sea' report. Parties are encouraged to contact the lead author, FAO, to highlight the successes and challenges they are experiencing in collating and submitting trade reports. From taxon experts we would appreciate input related to inconsistencies between the CITES trade database records and their experience.

7. For Parties and taxon experts interested in contributing, please contact the FAO Fisheries Focal Point on CITES who is one of the authors of the 'CITES and the Sea' report, Mr. Kim Friedman, a Senior Fisheries Resources Officer with the Marine and Inland Fisheries Branch of FAO. Mr. Friedman will attend CoP18, will be part of the side event to discuss this trade topic, on 25 August (12:15-14:00, Room G), alongside colleagues from UNEP-WCMC, CITES Secretariat and species experts. Mr Friedman can be contacted in person or reached on [Kim.Friedman@fao.org](mailto:Kim.Friedman@fao.org).