Guaiacwood is a large, slow-growing tree that is endemic in the Gran Chaco region of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay. Part of this region – the Dry Chaco, which covers parts of Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay – is characterised by a history of land-use change from forested areas to pastureland and cropland with Paraguay seeing the highest historical rate of land-use change out of the three countries. Paraguayan populations of Guaiacwood are fragmented and are fragmented, yet stable.

Guaiacwood trees produce a fragrant wood which is sought after both locally and internationally. The species is utilised locally for a variety of purposes, including burning to repel insects, as an ingredient for medicines, for fencing and for handicrafts. It is traded internationally predominantly for use in the perfume and essential oil industry but also as wood for flooring and other uses.

Concerns over the sustainability of Guaiacwood harvesting have been raised in CITES since 2006. Paraguay was subject to a Review of Significant Trade process in 2013 and, from 2014, has set export quotas for both guaiac (extract) and timber. Key importers include China, Taiwan PoC, and the European Union (EU). Nevertheless, the EU has a Negative opinion in place for wild-sourced Guaiac from Paraguay, except for six harvest areas. A private company, Nelixia manages one of the harvest areas for which the EU has a Positive opinion, and is applying a set of principles to ensure that harvesting for essential oil is sustainable and ethical. Currently, 4,800 hectares are covered under the management plan, with plans to scale up the area to 20,000 hectares by 2023. Guaiacwood is harvested using low-impact cutting of six trees per hectare and following a harvest cycle of 20 years with a projected harvest of 1,440 trees per year.
LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A key lesson learned from this case study is that CITES provides a mechanism for regulating the trade of endangered and threatened species, but the mechanism could benefit from additional auditing regulations to ensure that sustainable and ethical management of these species has been implemented. This would enable CITES Management Authorities to be sure that a raw material that has been exported is really sourced from the management plan that it was approved for. One of the potential ways to ensure this is by implementing a traceability tool and auditing management practices with external bodies (for instance through appropriate voluntary certifications such as UEBT and FairWild).

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