



CITES NDF Guidance 2025 Webinars

Responses to questions asked at the CITES NDF Guidance introductory webinars

- 1. Are Parties required to follow a specific non-detriment finding (NDF) guidance, or can alternative approaches be used? How do the different existing guidance materials (e.g. the IUCN Checklist or Germany's 9-step guidance for tree and plant species, and 6-step guidance for sharks) relate to the CITES NDF Guidance?**

The CITES NDF Guidance is not legally binding on Parties and is not intended to be prescriptive. The Convention does not specify that Parties must follow the particular frameworks or systems provided in this guidance. Parties might already be using other approaches to making NDFs and nothing in this guidance suggests ceasing the continued use of those.

The CITES NDF Guidance is provided to assist Parties, as appropriate, and there is no requirement that Parties must utilize or follow the guidance in the modules. Parties may find helpful elements, explanations, examples, approaches, etc. in the guidance that could be considered when making NDFs or in developing their own guidance in this regard. What is important is to consider all the main elements in the assessment and to be able to justify your conclusion.

Furthermore, this guidance is meant to be flexible and Parties might wish to adapt elements of the guidance for their own circumstances.

Many of the existing guidance materials (e.g. IUCN's checklist or Germany's 9-step guidance for tree and plant species, and 6-step guidance for sharks) have been shown to be compatible with all the guidance in the CITES NDF Guidance.

- 2. For each species group, is it required to use the provided NDF template, or can it be adjusted according to the needs or availability of data?**

As indicated above, the CITES NDF Guidance, including the templates, is not legally binding on Parties and it is not intended to be prescriptive.

The main elements in the assessment (templates) should be considered irrespective of the species group involved, to inform the conclusion of NDFs.

The guidance is meant to be flexible and Parties might wish to adapt elements of the guidance and templates for their own circumstances and based on the species group involved.

The modules have useful resources and suggestions for finding and interpreting information and guidance in one module may be equally useful for other taxa.

3. Is there guidance relating to taking into consideration the interests of local communities or other stakeholders?

NDFs are defined as “conclusions by a [Scientific Authority](#) that the export of [specimens](#) of a particular species will not impact negatively on the survival of that species in the wild”. Given that the purpose of NDFs is to assess the impact on harvest on the species, the CITES NDF Guidance primarily focuses on the species itself. However, the interests of local communities and other stakeholders may also be considered when making NDFs.

In relationship to this, local and traditional knowledge can be used in making NDFs. CITES NDF Guidance [module 3](#) on *Incorporation of Local and Traditional Knowledge* provide information about the role and utility of local and traditional knowledge in the making of NDFs for CITES-listed species. The module includes examples of current usage of local and traditional knowledge for making NDFs along with best practices and considerations for including such knowledge in processes for making NDFs, and in participatory species monitoring and management.

Other relevant sources include: [Resolution Conf. 16.6. \(Rev CoP18\)](#) on *CITES and livelihoods* and information on the [CITES and Livelihoods](#) webpage of the CITES website.

4. On the [CITES NDF webpage](#), several species-specific case studies using different NDF formats / templates are available. For these species, is it required to use the provided NDF template, or can it be adjusted according to the needs or availability of data?

The templates provided do not have to be used. The case studies on the webpage are examples of NDFs to showcase a variety of approaches that may be taken to make NDFs. Where there are reference values these should be adapted to the species involved taking into consideration the available data and the local context.

When making NDFs for species that are the same as the species in the case studies, some information relating to the biology, life history characteristics and conservation status contained in the case studies may be useful to consider.

5. For the conservation/threat status of a species, should the global or national status in the country of export be used?

The geographic scale of the NDF should be considered when deciding whether a sub-national, national, regional or global conservation/threat status of a species should be used.

CITES NDF Guidance [module 2](#) on *Practical considerations for making NDFs* provides information on scoring conservation status in the simplified assessments (Module 2 section 5.8) and in the comprehensive assessments (Module 2 section 6.5).

6. When using the simplified assessment template, how are the reference values for each criterion chosen when not provided in the guidance (i.e. non-reptile, or perennial plant)?

For species where reference values are not provided in the CITES NDF Guidance modules, the values can be based on information in the scientific literature and/or national surveys and determined by an expert in the species.

The supporting information that explains the reference values chosen for the assessment should be included in the NDF.

7. When making an NDF for a species with a lack of information on life history traits, how should the life history criterion in the simplified assessments be determined? If there is no information on life history traits, will the NDF be negative?

An unknown life history does not necessarily mean that the NDF will be negative. However, it might be necessary to progress with a precautionary approach. The Scientific Authority may advise that (limited) trade could be allowed, impacts monitored and management adapted. See [module 1](#) on *Principles and concepts of NDFs* for further guidance on;

- a) The Precautionary Approach,
- b) Making NDFs under conditions of low data availability (section 7), and
- c) Adaptive management.

[Module 2](#) (sections 5.6 and 5.7) also discusses situations where a species has not been studied. A few options include using a range of traits in closely related species or information from species studied in captivity, or using generation length as a proxy for assessing life history criteria (see section 4.3.1 of [module 8](#) on *NDFs for birds*). However, it is recommended to adopt a more precautionary approach if these options are used. It is recommended that Scientific Authorities endeavour to increase their knowledge of a species' biology by studying the species, as it is collected for trade, and commissioning biological field studies – where possible.

8. Once all the information on the species has been compiled, how is the conclusion reached on whether it is a positive or negative NDF?

The conclusion of an NDF is informed by the evaluation of the risk to the species taking into consideration a number of key factors discussed in Sections 6.1 to 6.6 of [module 2](#) as well as the impact of the harvest, management and monitoring discussed in Sections 6.7 and 6.8 in [module 2](#). The conclusion reached should take into consideration the vulnerability of the species and risk to the species concerned and the effectiveness of management measures to address these risks.

The process to document the risk, impact and management will provide you with a good understanding of whether the proposed trade is detrimental or not or whether conditions / management advice should be included, as needed. Some examples are provided in Section 6.8.5 on *Types of NDF Decisions* in [module 2](#).

Parties can look at the case studies and NDFs shared by other Parties (in [module 14](#) on *Case studies* and in the [CITES NDF database](#)) to get some understanding of the process and considerations that inform NDF conclusions reached by Parties.

9. Are there any exemptions to making NDFs for specimens that are not harvested from the wild?

All exports of Appendix I and Appendix II-listed species, apart from Pre-Convention specimens with source code O, require an NDF to be made. However, the source code of the specimen to be exported influences the approach needed for the NDF. Table 2B of [module 2](#) provides guidance on the respective needs for making NDFs for the different source codes:

For captive-produced animals (source codes C, D and F) or plants from artificial propagation (source code A), an NDF is required for the acquisition of the founder stock harvested from the wild for production.

For assisted production plant specimens (source code Y), the complexity of the NDF will depend on the specific production system and area and more guidance can be found in Table 2B of

[module 2](#) and Table 1 on page 12 of the [Guidance on terms related to the artificial propagation of CITES regulated plants](#).

Seized specimens, source code I, are generally not exported, however, in exceptional circumstances, [Resolution Conf. 17.8 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Disposal of illegally traded and confiscated specimens of CITES-listed species* recommends that if the Management Authority is satisfied that the sale of the specimens would not be detrimental to the survival of the species, it can sell or export or re-export the specimens.

10. How do CITES Authorities evaluate and monitor the exports when there is a large time difference between harvest and export (some cases might be significant e.g. a few years) or when the harvested specimens are processed into many different products?

The harvest must occur with a positive NDF, but the export may happen months or years after the harvest and in many different forms/products. In such cases, traceability systems to track products to specific harvest may be necessary to determine which exports are from non-detrimental harvest.

It may also be useful to put more emphasis on monitoring of harvest impacts on the ground and monitoring off-take / harvest in addition to the monitoring of exports.

11. What are the implications of stricter domestic measures by importing Parties for range States?*

Article XIV of the Convention on Effect on Domestic Legislation and International Conventions states that “*The provisions of the present Convention shall in no way affect the right of Parties to adopt:*

- (a) stricter domestic measures regarding the conditions for trade, taking, possession or transport of specimens of species included in Appendices I, II and III, or the complete prohibition thereof; or*
- (b) domestic measures restricting or prohibiting trade, taking, possession or transport of species not included in Appendix I, II or III.”*

In other words, under CITES Parties may adopt stricter measures that may include the complete prohibition of import of certain species or specimens.

**E.g. EU zero deforestation policies and import requirements for CITES-listed timber species.*

12. Is the CITES NDF guidance a useful basis for listing a new species in the Appendices?

When considering proposing the inclusion of a species in the CITES Appendix I or II, a Party should consider the criteria in [Resolution Conf. 9.24 \(Rev. CoP17\)](#) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II*.

For species already included in Appendix II, the Convention states in paragraph 3 in Article IV that “*A Scientific Authority in each Party shall monitor both the export permits granted by that State for specimens of species included in Appendix II and the **actual exports** of such specimens. Whenever a Scientific Authority determines that the export of specimens of any such species should be limited in order to maintain that species throughout its range at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystems in which it occurs and well above the level at which that species might become eligible for inclusion in Appendix I”.*