

CITES, trade and sustainable forest management

H.K. Chen and S. Zain

The requirement for non-detriment findings for species listed in CITES Appendix II ensures that the species can only be traded if they are harvested at a sustainable level.

The recent Appendix II listing of ramin (*Gonystylus* spp.) at the thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-13) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in October 2004 has yet again placed the international spotlight on trade in commercial forest species. While mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) had been listed in Appendix II at the previous CITES conference in 2002, the recent listing of ramin is significant in that it was adopted by consensus rather than a majority vote – perhaps a sign of the growing acceptance of international trade mechanisms in supporting sustainable use and management of commercially valuable species.

This sign is not limited to timber species. Equally significant, for example, is the listing by COP-13 of species that produce agarwood, a resinous wood used in incense and perfume. One of these species, *Aquilaria malaccensis*, was already listed in CITES Appendix II in 1995, but COP-13 listed all the rest of the agarwood-producing species in the genera *Aquilaria* and *Gyrinops*.

WHAT DOES CITES LISTING MEAN?

CITES was adopted in 1973 with the aim of ensuring that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. While CITES listing cannot by itself save or conserve any species, it supports those who wish to take action to do so through management interventions.

Appendix I includes species that may be threatened with extinction and which are or

may be affected by international trade. International trade in wild specimens of these species is subject to strict regulation and is normally only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Trade in artificially propagated or captive-bred specimens is allowed, subject to CITES provisions. Over 800 species are included in Appendix I, including tigers, great apes, certain parrots, certain species of orchids and cacti, and some timber species such as monkey-puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) and alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*), a conifer native to Chile and Argentina.

Appendix II includes species not considered to be under the same threat as those in Appendix I, but which may become so if trade is not regulated. International trade in these species is monitored through a licensing system to ensure that trade can be sustained without detriment to wild populations. Trade in wild, captive bred and artificially propagated specimens is allowed, subject to permit. Approximately 29 000 different species are included in Appendix II, including polar bears, Asiatic cobras, orchids, cacti and carnivorous plants, and some trees used in medicine such as African cherry (*Prunus Africana*) and red sandalwood (*Pterocarpus santalinus*).

Appendix III contains species that are not necessarily threatened on a global level, but that are protected within individual States that have sought the help of other CITES Parties to control international trade in that species. Examples include the Bengal fox from India and the Neotropical rattle snake from Honduras.

Chen Hin Keong is Senior Forest Trade Advisor and **Sabri Zain** is Advocacy and Campaigns Director, TRAFFIC International, Cambridge, United Kingdom. TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, is a joint programme of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and works in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES).



*Slats of ramin (*Gonystylus* spp.) for Venetian blinds, stained to take on various colours and hues; trade in ramin is regulated as a result of its listing in CITES Appendix II in 2004*



TRAFFIC SOUTHEAST ASIA/P. VANDIJK

***Agarwood and its products
– perfume and incense;
agarwood-producing
Aquilaria and Gyrinops
species are now all listed
in CITES Appendix II***

HOW IS CITES LINKED TO SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT?

In the past, many traders and some government agencies perceived CITES as a trade ban mechanism, with all the negative market implications of such a perception. This general view has changed, in part because CITES itself has evolved as it has recognized that sustainable trade can contribute to the survival of a species by providing value and therefore economic incentives to ensure its continued existence. This appreciation has allowed CITES to address sustainable forest management, and not just to stop international trade when other conservation efforts have failed and trade bans are the only management option left.

One key area in which CITES addresses sustainable forest management is the requirement for non-detriment findings for species in Appendix II. This means that the CITES Scientific Authority appointed by the national

government is required to determine that trade is not detrimental to the species' survival or to the ecosystem in which it occurs – in effect, to confirm that the species has been harvested at a sustainable level. If based on robust methodology, non-detriment findings should also enhance the setting of sustainable harvest and trade quotas.

The sole approved concessionaire for export of ramin in Indonesia was already pursuing non-detriment findings as part of the certification process. Malaysia was not yet seeking non-detriment findings for ramin, although the country has an adequate forest management framework for doing so. Malaysia's process for determining its annual allowable cut, for example, has been used to determine the sustainable harvest for the country, and if enhanced further it could provide the scientific basis for more formal non-detriment findings.

Another dimension of the trade and sustainable use dynamic is its impact on consumers. CITES is the only international convention controlling international trade in selected timber and non-wood forest species, and a CITES listing or decision inevitably has an impact on the market. In the past, the timber industry and timber-producing countries have resisted CITES listing, fearing that consumers would perceive the listing as an international trade ban or reject the timber if they perceive it as somehow "endangered". The recent listing of agarwood-producing species in Appendix II was also strongly opposed by many Near Eastern countries that utilize the species. The counter-argument is that such listings may give assurance to the consumer that the product is from a legal source and from sustainably managed forest – and may even encourage market demand as long as the resource can be sustainably managed. In support of this concept, many producer countries are investigating opportunities provided by independent certification initiatives, such as that of the Forest Stewardship Council, especially if they will help secure a premium price for certified timber. The CITES Secretariat and some Par-

ties have shown a growing interest in exploring the role of CITES in certification processes.

Most governments have national legislation related to sustainable forest management and control of timber harvesting. Trade tools such as CITES listings and certification are complementary to national laws and policies; they can help countries implement their legislation and manage their timber resources more effectively, while also stimulating international cooperation in these efforts. Just prior to the listing of ramin, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore had announced the establishment of a joint task force to address illegal ramin trade and improve CITES implementation. The listing of ramin in Appendix II will give these governments appropriate controls, processes, tools and information to assist the work of the task force.

Thus Appendix II listings help governments monitor the industry and extraction from the forest for CITES-listed species, providing some information and indicators to help them gauge their progress in achieving sustainable forest management.