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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISH TRADE

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UPDATE ON CITES RELATED ACTIVITIES

Executive Summary

This paper provides an update on the activities undertaken by FAO since the report of the fifteenth session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT/XV) in 2016 in relation to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These include the work conducted by FAO to improve capacity in the assessment and management of CITES listed species, and outlook for future activity in the lead up to the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18), planned for Sri Lanka in mid-2019.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

- Note the increase in number of commercially exploited aquatic species listed by CITES Parties, and the on-going need for FAO to provide advice to FAO Members and CITES Parties on threatened species determination and management;
- Provide guidance to FAO, on the needs of Members in regards CITES provisions, and to ensure Members have adequate information well in advance of future CITES listing decisions;
- Provide feedback to FAO on the work plan dealing with CITES issues, in terms of the topics, substance and process of delivering an understanding of the impacts of CITES listings, as well as their likely effectiveness for conservation.



INTRODUCTION

1. CITES is an international agreement established with the objective to protect and conserve endangered species by ensuring that their survival is not threatened by international trade. Roughly 5 000 species of animals and 29 000 species of plants are subjected to protection by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade. Those species are listed in one of three Appendices, and international trade in these species is controlled according to the degree of protection they require.

2. In 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)¹ was signed between FAO and CITES to formalize the intentions of the two organizations in strengthening the cooperation on common issues related to commercially-exploited aquatic species. The MoU specifies that FAO should carry out a scientific and technical review of all relevant proposals for amendment of Appendices I and II.

3. The terms of reference of the FAO Expert Advisory Panel for the Assessment of Proposals to Amend Appendices I and II of CITES Concerning Commercially-exploited Aquatic Species stipulate that the Panel should: 1) “assess each proposal from a scientific perspective in accordance with the CITES biological listing criteria, taking account of the recommendations on the criteria made to CITES by FAO”; and 2) “comment, as appropriate, on technical aspects of the proposal in relation to biology, ecology, trade and management issues, as well as, to the extent possible, the likely effectiveness for conservation”.

4. This paper provides a summary description of activity related to the 2006 MoU and outlook for future activity in the lead up to CoP18, planned in mid-2019.

LISTING OF COMMERCIALY EXPLOITED AQUATIC SPECIES

5. Under the endorsement of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI)² (para. 34), during the last biennium FAO has continued its close collaboration with the CITES Secretariat, in order to support Members on issues related to threatened species, trade regulation, and implementation of CITES provisions.

6. The fifth FAO Expert Advisory Panel for the Assessment of Proposals to Amend CITES Appendices I and II (Rome, Italy, 6–10 June 2016) evaluated commercially exploited aquatic species listing proposals in advance of the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) (Johannesburg, South Africa, 24 September to 5 October 2016), according to standard rules and procedures. Advice provided by the FAO Expert Panel³ included a scientific assessment of each proposal and the likely effectiveness of a listing for conservation of the species.

7. In 2013 and 2016, CITES Parties listed 20 new shark and ray species, one ornamental fish and one invertebrate under Appendix II. The listing of some of these species, for which scientific assessment indicated CITES criteria were not met, reveals a greater willingness of CITES Parties to add trade controls to commercially exploited aquatic species than was previously the case. Terrestrial species make up the largest proportion of CITES listings, however, the number of these species coming under CITES trade controls is also increasing. For example, 18 timber species were listed at the inception of CITES, with this number increasing to over 600 species by 2013, growing again to more than 900 species in 2016.

8. Despite marine species extinction in the oceans being low compared to the analogous situation on land (no oceanic species have gone extinct in the last 50 years), environmental agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have begun to put greater focus on marine conservation

¹ www.cites.org/eng/disc/sec/FAO-CITES-e.pdf

² www.fao.org/3/a-i6882e.pdf

³ Fifth Expert Advisory Panel Reports (www.fao.org/fishery/cites-fisheries/ExpertAdvisoryPanel/en).

issues. Many environmental interests now postulate that marine extinctions will follow the same trajectory as terrestrial ones, with expression only delayed in oceans, compared with events on land.

9. There are a number of NGOs and conservation agencies advocating marine listing proposals for CoP18, which will take place in Sri Lanka in mid-2019. The timing of this CoP is significant as it aligns to a period when there will be a particular focus on measuring fishery performance under fisheries related targets of i) the global 2030 agenda (specifically sustainable development goal (SDG 14), and ii) the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) (specifically Aichi Biodiversity Target 6).

10. FAO's work in delivering science based information into the threatened species determination processes, e.g. CITES listing amendment process (and analogous processes of Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/TRAFFIC – Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC) assessments, IUCN Red List and Red List Index), continues to be needed. Many of the agencies and conventions leading or involved in these global processes require specialized technical information on commercially exploited aquatic species and fisheries management issues. With ranching and farming of marine species designated as vulnerable or threatened (e.g. Humphead wrasse), FAO's aquaculture expertise is also available, where required.

11. COFI recognized the challenge of funding an effective Expert Panel process. With the recommendation of COFI (para. 34) and observing, as appropriate, the principle of equitable geographical representation, future funding of FAO's input into the CITES listing process will come from its Regular Programme, but also include contributions through alternative mechanisms.

WORK PLAN IN LEAD UP TO CITES COP18

12. FAO plans to continue to collaborate with CITES Secretariat and Parties, as per COFI recommendation (para. 34), to enhance cooperation on commercially exploited marine species issues, and to present information to CITES Parties at the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee (27 November–01 December 2017) and 29th meeting of the Animals Committee (18–22 July 2017). One issue of importance to review in 2017 is the last CITES listing process of commercially exploited marine species, to ensure FAO's advice was given appropriate consideration by the CITES Secretariat, and at CoP17.

13. FAO will publish a review on the impact of CITES listings of sharks and rays in 2013/2014 as per COFI recommendation (para. 36), and more closely examine the non-fin trade of sharks and ray products. Knowledge of trade in non-fin commodities, especially shark meat, was highlighted as a gap in a recent review of trade in shark and ray products⁴.

14. Well in advance of the next CITES CoP, FAO will collate information (data collection, analysis and reporting) on commercially exploited aquatic species for which CITES listing is being advocated (Japanese and American eels, tuna, precious corals, tropical sea cucumbers, coral reef fish traded as ornamentals, freshwater mussels, plus additional sharks and rays), in preparation for potential listing proposals in 2019 and the subsequent FAO Expert Advisory Panel for the Assessment of Proposals to Amend CITES Appendices I and II. To prepare this information, FAO welcomes offers of technical collaboration and financial support (para. 35).

15. FAO will continue to produce and distribute communication material on the status of commercially exploited aquatic species and their management. Examples of such material can be seen

⁴ Dent & Clarke. 2015. *State of the global market for shark products*. www.fao.org/3/8109790b-3a76-4add-9d46-66e4dbb2eab2/i4795e.pdf

in Expert Advisory Panel reports⁵ and the “Database of measures on conservation and management of sharks”⁶.

16. FAO will continue cooperation with the IUCN technical working group regarding the listing of fisheries species on the IUCN Red List and Red List Index, as per COFI recommendation (para.138), to describe the complementarity and differences of IUCN, CITES and FAO assessments of marine species and their status.

⁵ www.fao.org/fishery/cites-fisheries/ExpertAdvisoryPanel/en

⁶ www.fao.org/ipoa-sharks/database-of-measures/en/