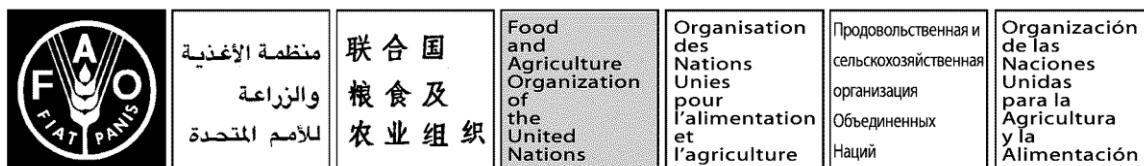


July 2019

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WESTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC FISHERY COMMISSION (WECAFC)

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Miami, United States of America, 15-18 July 2019

Latest developments in the conservation, management and trade of queen conch under CITES

This document was submitted by the CITES Secretariat to provide an update on the latest developments in the conservation, management and trade of queen conch under the auspices of CITES. It draws largely on the report of the CITES Secretariat to CoP18, contained in document [CoP18 Doc. 85](#).

CITES CoP18 was scheduled to take place 23 May – 3 June 2019 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, but has been postponed (see [Notification No. 2019/025](#)) with no new dates agreed as of the time of writing of this document (May 2019).

At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions [17.285 to 17.290](#) on Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*) (see Annex 1), which have formed the work program for the CITES Secretariat and Parties for the period 2016 to 2019.

Suggested Action by the Commission

WECAFC member states are invited to take note of this document and provide feedback on the draft decisions proposed to the CITES Secretariat so it can include those in its oral update to CITES CoP18.

Implementation of Decision 17.285

1. With regard to the implementation of Decision 17.285, the CITES Secretariat reports in document [CoP18 Doc. 85](#) on the 3rd meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM/CITES working group on queen conch was held in Panama City (30 October – 1 November 2018) and its outcomes.
2. The Secretariat further reports that the recommendations from the meeting on queen conch concerning trade (Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/7), conversion factors (Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/8) and IUU in queen conch fisheries (Recommendation WECAFC/17/2019/9) were reviewed by the WECAFC Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) on 19-20 November 2018 and that revised versions of these recommendations were to be submitted to this current meeting of WECAFC.

Implementation of Decision 17.286

3. Implementation of Decision 17.286 depends on the prior implementation of Decision 17.289. The Secretariat reported to the Standing Committee at its 69th and 70th meetings (SC69, Geneva, November 2017; SC70, Sochi, October 2018) that no funding had been made available for the implementation of Decision 17.289, except for the funding for the previously mentioned 3rd meeting of the working group on queen conch that was held in Panama City (30 October -1 November 2018).

Implementation of Decision 17.287

4. The implementation of Decision 17.287 was dependent on range States requesting advice from the Animals Committee on the making of NDFs for queen conch, research in support of sustainable fishing and trade and other technical matters. No such request for advice was received by the Animals Committee.
5. At the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC29, Geneva, July 2017), the Secretariat drew attention to the adoption of the NDF guideline format for trade in Caribbean Queen Conch, developed by FAO/WECAFC in collaboration with CITES and agreed by WECAFC at its 16th meeting (Guadeloupe, June 2016). The NDF guideline format was developed as one of the outputs of the joint FAO/WECAFC capacity-building project on queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) in the Caribbean region implemented after CoP16 and were discussed and revised at the second meeting of the joint CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM working group on queen conch (November 2014). They are also published on the queen conch page of the CITES website.
6. The Secretariat further reported that at the 3rd meeting of the working group (October-November 2018), concerns were raised that the current NDF guidance was overly complicated and there was a desire to develop a more condensed and user-friendly version. The Scientific, Statistical and Technical Advisory Group of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM working group on queen conch was tasked with reviewing the currently available NDFs on queen conch and guidance in order to develop a simplified template that would be reviewed by the Animals Committee as envisaged under Decision 17.287. The Secretariat suggested to renew the Decision in order to allow further review.

Implementation of Decision 17.288

7. At AC29, Honduras and Nicaragua were identified as Parties making use of scientific quotas for queen conch (see document [AC29 Doc. 26](#)). The Secretariat concluded that the use and scope of the term “scientific quota for queen conch” was not entirely clear as it could be used to describe a commercial export quota to finance scientific activities but could also refer to an export quota limited to trade transactions with a scientific purpose (Purpose code “S” in the CITES trade database). However, Resolution Conf. 14.7 (Rev. CoP15) and the Guidelines contained in the annex to the Resolution do not include

guidance related to the setting of quotas for a specific purpose, e.g. scientific. “Scientific quotas” are not mentioned or defined as such in the Resolution, which consequently does not provide any specific guidance in this regard. The Secretariat reminded Parties that, whether the quota concerned a commercial quota to fund scientific activities or was a trade transaction for scientific purposes, the provisions of Article IV, including the necessity to make non-detriment findings, would apply.

8. To assist in the fulfillment of Decision 17.288, the Animals Committee developed a Notification to the Parties, which was subsequently published by the Secretariat (see Notification to the Parties [No. 2018/035](#) of 18 April 2018). The notification reminded Parties of the requirement to carry out a non-detriment finding and requested the following information:
 - a. the extent to which they use scientific research in the making of non-detriment findings;
 - b. their process for establishing levels of export for specimens of queen conch;
 - c. the process for, and the objectives of setting “scientific quotas”, if any for queen conch; and
 - d. whether the catch from scientific surveys contributes to their overall exports.
9. The Secretariat analyzed the responses that were received from seven Parties (Belize, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America), and presented the results to the Animals Committee at its 30th meeting (AC30, Geneva, July 2018) in document [AC30 Doc. 22](#). Honduras was the only Party to report the use of “scientific quotas”, stating that this stemmed from commitments it had made at the 22nd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC22, Lima, July 2006) in order to exit the Review of Significant Trade process. Honduras further clarified that the objectives of its scientific export quota were two-fold: (1) the collection of scientific information to establish scientifically justified annual harvest and export quotas and (2) ensure that annual harvest and export quotas are ecologically possible and economically profitable without causing damage to the stock. Honduras responded that the scientific quota makes up 100% of the exports, representing approximately 85% of the total catch, with the remaining 15% allocated for domestic consumption.
10. At AC30, the Committee noted document [AC30 Doc. 22](#) and the progress that Honduras had made in implementing its commitments regarding the management of and trade in queen conch. The Committee considered that Honduras had fulfilled the commitments made at AC22.
11. In fulfilment of Decision 17.288, the Committee further noted that the term “scientific quotas” is not recognized by CITES and that all exports for wild specimens of Appendix II species (as is the case of *Strombus gigas*) are to be supported by a non-detriment finding formulated by the Scientific Authority of the exporting range State, based on the best technical and scientific information available, regardless of the purpose of the transaction (whether scientific “S”, commercial “T”, medical “M”, educational “E”, or any other purpose code defined in Resolution Conf. 12.3 (Rev. CoP17) on *Permits and certificates*).

Implementation of Decision 17.289

12. In documents [SC69 Doc. 63](#) and [SC70 Doc. 60](#), the Secretariat reported to the Standing Committee that no external funding had been made available for the implementation of Decision 17.289.

13. At SC70, the Secretariat reported that it had worked with FAO on a funding proposal to support activities in Decision 17.289, which had been submitted to the European Commission for consideration.
14. The Standing Committee's working group on traceability developed a number of guiding documents to support Parties in the implementation of traceability systems including a working definition for traceability in the CITES context and technical and managerial guidelines to plan and implement traceability systems. These issues and documents are discussed in document [CoP18 Doc. 42](#). The Secretariat is preparing to provide Parties in the Caribbean region with access to a cloud-based electronic Permit system (UNCTAD e-CITES). Such a system, if implemented, could provide a mechanism to capture and exchange data on queen conch harvest and trade, if Parties in the region agree to do so.

Implementation of Decision 17.290

15. In document [SC69 Doc. 63](#), the Secretariat noted that its report under Decision 17.290 was linked to assistance that the Secretariat should provide to range States of *Strombus gigas* under Decision 17.289, for which no external funding had been made available. With regard to Decision 17.285, the Secretariat had further noted that the 3rd meeting of the joint CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM working group on queen conch provided good opportunities to gather relevant information.

Conclusions

16. Based on the outcome of the 3rd meeting of the queen conch working group, the Secretariat is of the view that while the *Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan* has now been endorsed by all range States, there has been limited progress in terms of its implementation. As a result, many of the activities outlined in Decisions 17.285 to 17.290 are either ongoing or remain valid for future implementation. The Secretariat is of the view that it is important for this work to continue and for the Conference of the Parties to monitor its progress. The Secretariat has therefore developed a revised set of draft decisions to this effect for the consideration at CITES CoP18 that are presented in Annex 2 to this document.
17. The Secretariat notes that the Scientific, Statistical and Technical Advisory Group of the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM working group on queen conch at its 1st meeting, 23-26 April, 2019 in Miami, discussed several suggestions on how to improve the current set of draft decisions, which will also be present at the current meeting.