CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

_____

Eighteenth meeting of the Plants Committee
Buenos Aires (Argentina), 17-21 March 2009

Any other business

TRADE IN AGAVACEAE

1. This document has been submitted by the Management Authority of Switzerland*.

Background

2. A series of rather mild winters in Europe coupled with new trends in gardening and landscaping has created an increasing demand for succulent and other xerophytic plants that are suitable for outdoor cultivation in temperate regions. Public awareness is spreading that plants from higher desert regions of North America can satisfy this demand. Consequently international trade in wild-collected specimens of Agavaceae seems to be rapidly increasing, particularly to Europe. Additional species are steadily entering trade, as they prove to withstand European winters. In addition, specimen plants of some non-hardy species are used for interior designs in contemporary architecture.

3. In North America "xeriscaping", i.e. landscaping with native desert plants has stimulated a market for wild-collected desert plants, from such families as Cactaceae and Agavaceae. This market is supplied in first place by wild-collected specimens from southern United States of America and originally had rather national dimensions. However, supply for the international market with specimen plants of Agavaceae originating from the United States of America seems to be increasing (Annex 1).

4. Recently, the supply for the international market of wild-collected specimen plants of Agavaceae originating from Mexico reached a high level (Annex 1).

5. It appears that wild-collected specimens of Agavaceae could become an important component of the wild-collected ornamental plant trade, although second to bulbs and tubers in volume. However, it appears that this trade is not monitored, and there is little information on the effects of harvest on the conservation status of species involved. Whereas many species in trade are common and wide-spread, concerns have been raised that harvest could surpass sustainable levels for some species with restricted ranges and populations. Harvest is predominantly in older specimen plants and may have a conspicuous impact on local populations and regeneration. Further, the impact of harvest on fragile desert environments could be of concern, as Agavaceae taxa usually constitute important elements of the local vegetation and ecosystems.

6. Trade consists in wild-collected *Agave* spp. and *Yucca* spp. originating from Mexico and the United States of America, and *Dasylirion* spp. and *Nolina* spp. originating from Mexico (Annex 1).

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

7. Although there are three species of Agavaceae listed in the CITES Appendices [*Agave parviflora* (Appendix I), and *Agave victoriae-reginae* and *Nolina interrata* (Appendix II)], these species are not the species now being sought after by international demand. Additionally, these species are not suitable for outdoor cultivation in temperate regions.:..It appears that the international trade in wild-collected specimens of Agavaceae deserves the attention of the Plants Committee and appropriate action should be taken in order to identify and address possible conservation concerns.

EXAMPLES

1. *Yucca queretaroensis*

Yucca queretaroensis has been described in 1989 by Piña Luca after his fieldwork in the gorges along the Rio Extorax, in the Rio Moctezuma basin, located in the Mexican state of Queretaro. Meanwhile this *Yucca* has also been found in the state of Hidalgo, northeast of the city of Zimapan, also in deep gorges along small rivers on elevations up to 1000-1300 m. Range and population of *Yucca queretaroensis* are quite restricted, it is considered rare.

In 2006 for the first time wild-collected specimen size plants with heavy trunks of this species were offered on the international market.

Wild-collected specimen plants of *Yucca queretaroensis* in a European nursery.

2. Other *Yucca* spp.

Yucca rostrata, a native species of US (Texas) and MX (Chihuahua and Coahuila): Specimen plants in international trade.

Yucca rostrata in international trade.

Yucca carnerosana, a native species of northeastern Mexico, in a European nursery.

Yucca torreyi, a native species of US (Texas and New Mexico) and northeastern Mexico.

Yucca elata, a native species of southwestern USA and northern Mexico.

Yucca faxoniana, a native species of US (Texas and New Mexico) and MX (Chihuahua and Coahuila): Specimen plants in international trade.

Yucca thompsoniana, a native species of US (Texas) and northeastern Mexico.

3. *Agave* spp.

Agave parrasana, a native species of MX (SE Coahuila), in international trade.

Agave neomexicana, a native species of US (S New Mexico and Texas) and possibly adjacent MX [and *Dasylirion texanum*, a native species of US (Texas) and MX (Coahuila)].

4. *Dasylirion* spp.

Dasylirion miquihuanense is a recently described endemic species from northeastern Mexico. Specimen plants in international trade.

Dasylirium quadrangulatum, a native species from northeastern Mexico: Wild-collected specimen plants in international trade.

Dasylirion miquihuanense in international trade.