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OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

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VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION STANDARDS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CITES FOR TRADE IN MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC PLANT SPECIES

This document has been submitted by Germany and Mexico at the request of TRAFFIC in relation with agenda items 17.3, 18.2, 42, 45 and 55.[1]

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Voluntary certification standards and the implementation of CITES for trade in medicinal and aromatic plant species

Stacks of harvested wild Candelilla *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*. Chihuahua Desert, near Torreón, Chihuahua, Mexico © Edward Parker / WWF

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Aim of this document and links to CoP18 agenda items

Trade of wild-sourced CITES Appendix II-listed medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) totalled 25 million kg between 2006 and 2015. The trade chains relating to these species are often long and complex, involving multiple companies in several countries (Lehr & Jaramillo, 2017). Combined with a lack of capacity and resources that may hamper the ability of CITES Parties to make Non-detriment Findings (NDFs) and Legal Acquisition Findings (LAFs) (Kasterine *et al.*, 2012), the implementation of CITES can often be a difficult process for MAP species when case-specific and field-based information is not available to CITES authorities.

This document presents a summary to date of a project, implemented by TRAFFIC in collaboration and with the support of the German Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), aiming to **identify how voluntary certification standards (VCS) application to CITES-listed MAPs can assist with implementation of CITES and fulfilment of its requirements**. This is to assist governments in obtaining the information necessary to make decisions about trade in CITES species, aid industry in enabling sustainable and legal trade in CITES Appendix II species, and, overall, reduce barriers to sustainable and legal MAPs trade that is beneficial to conservation and livelihoods of those depending on trade. This information document represents an update on findings presented in the PC24 Inf. 12, and discussed at a side event of the 24th meeting of the CITES Plants Committee on "CITES and certification of medicinal and aromatic plants".

This document links to a number of working documents and agenda items at the CITES CoP18, in particular the following:

- *CITES implementation for trade in medicinal plant species*—CoP18 Doc. 55: Collaboration with VCS is proposed as a possible means to increase sustainability and traceability in supply and value chains.
- *Non-detriment findings*—CoP18 Doc. 45: Proposes undertaking research to support updated guidance on NDFs and organising an interdisciplinary workshop reviewing draft guidance on NDFs.
- *Traceability*—CoP18 Doc. 42: Proposes a working definition of traceability and provision of support to Parties implementing traceability systems.
- *Participatory mechanism for rural communities*—CoP18 Doc 17.3: Community livelihoods and natural resource management discussed in this agenda item show crossover with VCSs.
- *CITES and livelihoods* (Proposal by Peru)—CoP18 Doc 18.2: Proposes for the re-established Working Group on CITES and livelihoods to evaluate the possibility of using registered marks of certification for CITES listed species traded by rural communities (18.AA a).

Background and context

Trade in medicinal and aromatic plants

Approximately 60,000 plant species are used globally for medicinal purposes, of which about 28,000 have well-documented use, and approximately 3,000 species are estimated to be traded internationally, with only one-third of those known to be in the commercial cultivation (Jenkins *et al.*, 2018). In terms of the global threat to species, information is available for only 7% of MAPs globally, and for those, around 20% of species are threatened with extinction in the wild against the IUCN Red List criteria. The trade in MAPs is among critical drivers of such threat. Of all globally traded MAPs, value of trade has almost tripled in the past 20 years (from USD1.1 billion in 1999 to USD3 billion in 2015).

CITES provides an important, and often only, form of regulation of trade in MAPs. Over 800 species of MAPs are listed in Appendix II of CITES. From the CITES trade data analysis covering the period of 2006–2015, **43 CITES Appendix II wild MAP species are significantly traded under CITES**. The total amount of wild-sourced CITES MAPs traded in the period was 25 million kg.

The top three exporting countries (according to importer reported quantities) represented 75% of all wild-sourced exports (kg as unit): Mexico, Cameroon, and South Africa, while five countries were responsible for 77% of imports: France (26%), USA (16%), Japan (15%), Germany (11%) and Spain (7%). See Figure 1 for the map of most significant exporters and importers of wild-sourced CITES Appendix II-listed MAPs, and

Figure 2 for an illustration of the continuous reliance on wild sources in the trade in CITES-listed MAPs in the analysed period.

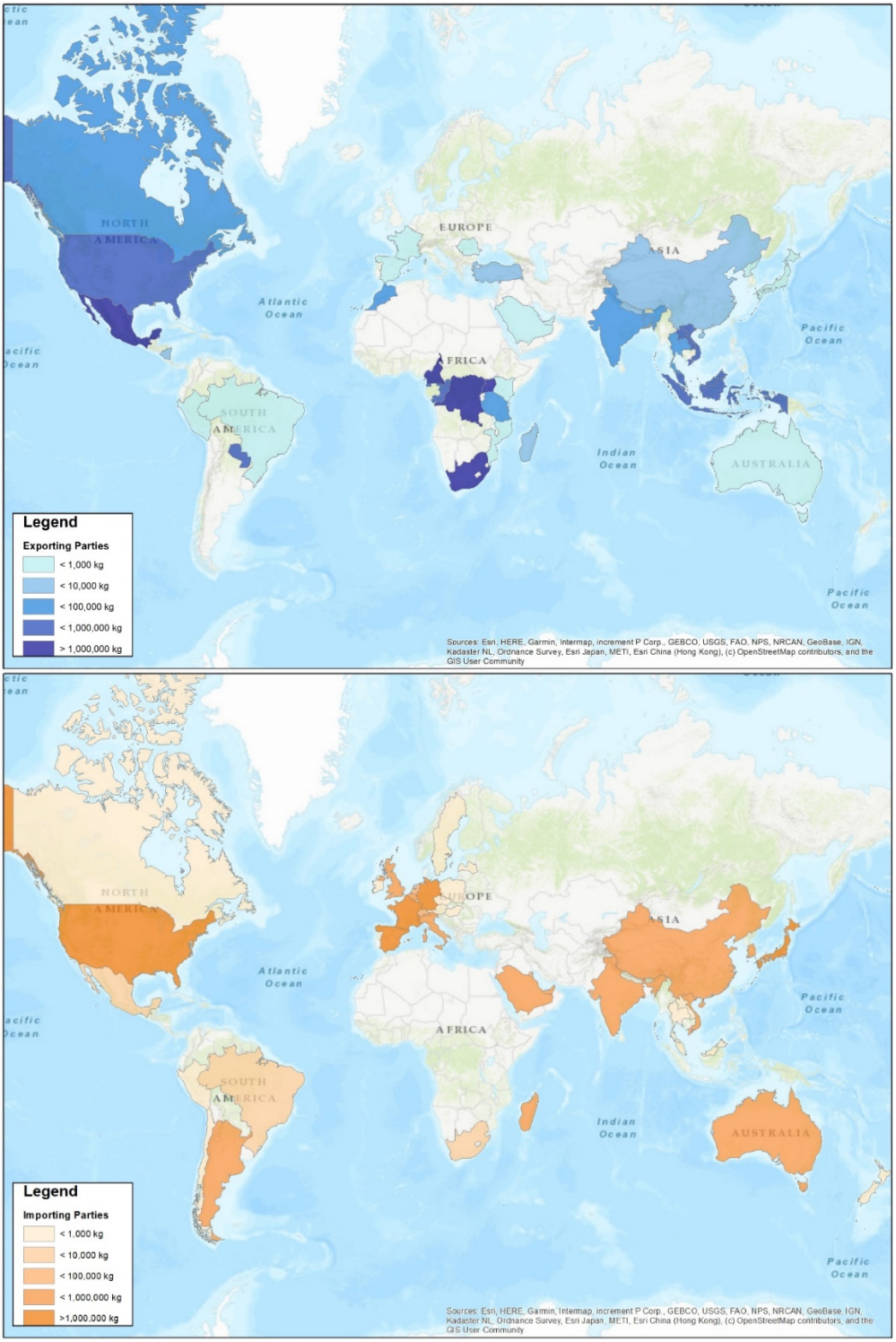

Figure 1 Above: Heat map of most significant exporters of wild sourced, Appendix-II MAPs based on importer reported quantities (in kg) for commercial purposes between 2006–2015. Below: Heat map of most significant importers (in kg) of wild-sourced, CITES Appendix II medicinal and aromatic plants for commercial purposes between 2006–2015. Data from the CITES Trade Database, available at: https://trade.cites.org/.

In terms of **species with the biggest volume in trade**, based on the importer reported data, trade in *Euphorbia antisyphilitica* and *Prunus africana*, accounted for 73%. Additionally, trade is significant in some MAP genera: *Aloe* spp., *Dendrobium* spp., and *Aquilaria* spp. In the analysis of trade data as reported by exporter, *Nardostachys grandiflora* from Nepal appears globally significant in trade.

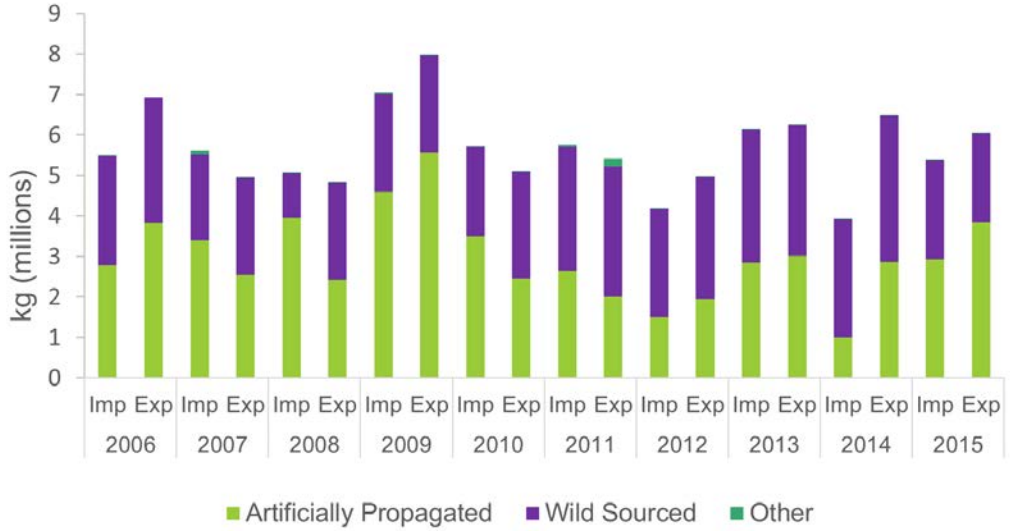

Figure 2 Importer and Exporter reported quantities of wild sourced (W), artificially propagated (A) and other material of CITES Appendix-II listed MAPs 2006–2015, when quantities were reported in kg.

Trade in wild-sourced MAPs has particular features, which creates both challenges and opportunities. The challenges include the increasing demand (including by the constantly diversifying industry sectors), complex trade chains and traceability issues. Millions of wild-harvesters in poor and marginalised regions around the world are reliant on this trade, which is often operating in the context of complex legality (including the issues of land access, tenure and use rights), with much of the trade being informal and under-reported. There are also issues of identification as MAPs are mostly traded as parts, derivatives, finished products, including in mixed and processed form. On the other hand, the market awareness of sustainability issues is growing, and best practices are available, as well as some policy and legislative frameworks in place (notably including CITES regulations), creating opportunities for establishing the conditions for sustainable and legal trade in wild MAPs, benefitting livelihoods, healthcare opportunities, food security, as well as ecosystems and other species.

CITES Authorities in general face problems with NDF/LAF making when information is lacking/deficient, which is particularly apparent with MAP species. Given the length and complexity of MAPs trade chains, often involving multiple companies in several countries (Lehr & Jaramillo, 2017), combined with a lack of capacity and resources that may hamper the ability of CITES Parties to make data-based and meaningful NDFs and LAFs (Kasterine *et al.*, 2012), the implementation of Article IV can often be a difficult process for MAP species. This project explored an opportunity for appropriate voluntary certification standards (VCSs), if implemented for CITES Appendix II-listed MAPs, to provide case-specific and field-based data and information necessary for making NDFs and hence support CITES authorities in the implementation of its provisions, in making both NDFs and LAFs.

Voluntary Certification Standards and their relevance for CITES

Voluntary certification standards (VCSs) were created to address consumer concerns regarding social, environmental and ethical aspects of production (Shanley *et al.,* 2008). These schemes exist in many industries to evaluate performance against a set of standards and can be led by governments, third parties or companies themselves.

Third-party voluntary standards allow for external auditing and tend to require more exacting scientific standards. These are able to separate genuinely responsible companies from companies that merely engage in hype surrounding environmental issues (Shanley *et al.,* 2008). Examples of third-party certification schemes include the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), which certifies sustainable fisheries and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) which certifies areas of forest that harvest timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) sustainably.

In the context of wild-sourced plants (excluding timber), fungi and lichens, the most comprehensive system currently in use is the FairWild Standard, which sets out key criteria and principles for companies and

producers to meet around the verifiably sustainable sourcing and equitable trade; compliance is assured through third-party auditing. A selection of certification schemes are backed by laws, such as the EU organic production regulation which came into force in 2009 (The Council of the European Union, 2007), which sets out the standard for organic certification.

Beyond the independent third-party standards, there are numerous internal company standards, such as Unilever's Sustainable Agriculture Code[1]. The internal company codes are aimed at promoting sustainability and reducing the companies' impact on the environment. Although important, there is evidence that some companies have used codes like this to market their achievements and corporate responsibility, whilst only doing so superficially (Cherry & Sneirson, 2010).

The application of appropriate certification schemes for harvest and trade in wild MAPs may provide relevant field-based resource assessment information (and potentially other data, e.g. on harvest methods or on legality of acquisition) needed to complement and fill-in potentially limited data access, resources and capacities available for conducting NDFs. Also, given the long and complicated nature of MAP supply chains, it is possible that implementation of traceability required by certification schemes could help Management Authorities in making LAFs relating to MAPs.

Methods and results of the project

To evaluate the potential and suitability of VCSs to aid in CITES processes, the research project '*CITES-listed medicinal and aromatic plant species (MAPs) and voluntary certification schemes*' was conducted by TRAFFIC in 2017 to 2019 in collaboration and with the support of the German Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). A mix of approaches were used to identify how voluntary certification can assist with implementation of CITES and fulfilment of its requirements for Appendix II wild-sourced MAP species:

Review of Literature: A review of relevant literature including trade data analysis and species suitability analysis.

Certification Scheme matrix: A comparison of four VCSs (FairWild Standard, Union for Ethical BioTrade/UTZ, FSC and EU Organic Regulations) against the implementation of Article IV of CITES to evaluate how relevant and compliant certification schemes are against the relevant CITES requirements.

CITES Plants Committee side event: A side event entitled "*CITES and certification of medicinal and aromatic plants*" was held at PC24, linked to PC24 Inf. 12.

Online questionnaire: Online questionnaires targeting (1) CITES Parties (both Scientific and Management Authorities) involved in MAPs trade and (2) industry across different points of trade chains was developed and responses collected between September and December 2018. The responses were collected via several channels, including through the CITES Plants Committee regional representatives, requesting responses from CITES Parties attending the CITES and Livelihood International Workshop (November 2018), follow-up with existing industry contacts, and requesting industry associations (for example the American Herbal Products Association) to share the survey with the members. In total 33 responses were received: 18 from CITES Parties and 15 from industry were received, consolidated and analysed.

Stakeholder workshop: A two-day workshop[2] was held in Cambridge, UK between the 24th–25th January 2019. The workshop was attended by participants from the CITES Authorities (China, Germany, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, and the United Kingdom), CITES Secretariat, industry association and bodies (American Herbal Product Association and Natural Resources Stewardship Circle), individual companies representatives, certification bodies, NGOs and IGOs.

[1] Available: https://www.unilever.com/Images/ul-sac-v1-march-2010-spread_tcm244-423998_en.pdf
[2] The overview of the workshop available following the link: https://www.traffic.org/news/making-cites-work-for-wild-medicinal-and-aromatic-plants/

Voluntary Certification Standards with specific potential to facilitate CITES implementation for MAP species

At the stakeholder workshop attendants confirmed the general potential of VCS to assist in CITES processes. Participants from CITES authorities noted that there have been challenges in the formulation of NDFs for some species where there is a lack of knowledge or up to date information. Private industry stated that often CITES listing is seen as creating additional barriers to trade. CITES Authorities and industry in general agreed that VCSs could help provide information to the NDF and LAF process, improve the efficiency of the permitting process and creating scope for differentiating operators implementing best practices to enable trade when other trade restriction are in place. There was also consensus that sustainable sourcing of MAPs among industry members may be facilitated if certification and data transfer to CITES Authorities visibly turns out to improve efficiency of permitting processes.

Given that few examples of certification schemes supporting the CITES process exist, and in order to evaluate how relevant and compliant certification schemes are against the relevant CITES requirements, a matrix was drawn up to compare certification standard requirements against the NDF requirements recommended in *Resolution Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) Non-detriment findings,* LAF requiremets found in Article IV, paragraph 2 (b) and also against guidelines produced for NDFs for perennial plants (Wolf *et al.*, 2016).

Four standards were included in the initial review to assess whether the certification schemes can provide sources of data and technical assistance to CITES SAs in their efforts to make accurate, up to date NDFs:

- FairWild: FairWild Standard Version 2.0 Performance Indicators[3]
- UEBT/UTZ: Field Checklist for UEBT/UTZ Certified Herbal Tea[4]
- FSC: International Generic Indicators[5]
- EU Organic Regulation[6]

The matrix presented in Table 1 is a "traffic light" summary of the full matrix[7] but outlines that some certification schemes may be more suited to certifying CITES listed MAP species than others using the current indicators. The FairWild Standard has all of the relevant indicators, but this is to be expected as it was created to certify MAP species such as those listed on the CITES Appendices. UEBT/UTZ and FSC both have indicators that produce documents that could be helpful to MAs and SAs when making NDFs and LAFs, but some of the indicators are more site-specific rather than species-specific.

Table 1 Matrix comparing the general guidelines for making NDFs and LAFs against four certification standards.

NDFs Res. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17).	9-step NDF for perennial plants (steps where relevant information would be collated)	FairWild Standard Version 2.0 Performance Indicators	Field Checklist for UEBT/UTZ Certified Herbal Tea	FSC International Generic Indicators	EU Organic Regulation, from: (EC) 834/2007 and (EC) 889/2008
A. Species biology and life-history characteristics	Steps 1 and 5	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	no relevant indicator
B. species range (historical and current);	Steps 4, 5 and 6	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines
C. population structure, status and trends (in the harvested area, nationally and internationally);	Steps 4, 5 and 6	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines

[3] Available: http://www.fairwild.org/certification-documents/
[4] Available: http://ethicalbiotrade.org/dl/Field-Checklist-for-UEBT_UTZ-Herbal-Tea-version-1.3-Nov-2016.pdf
[5] Available: https://ca.fsc.org/preview.fsc-std-60-004-international-generic-indicators.a-1011.pdf
[6] From: (EC) 834/2007 and (EC) 889/2008
[7] Please contact TRAFFIC for a copy of the draft matrix

NDFs Res. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17).	9-step NDF for perennial plants (steps where relevant information would be collated)	FairWild Standard Version 2.0 Performance Indicators	Field Checklist for UEBT/UTZ Certified Herbal Tea	FSC Internatio-nal Generic Indicators	EU Organic Regulation, from: (EC) 834/2007 and (EC) 889/2008
D. threats	Steps 4, 5, 6 and 7	full consideration of guidelines	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines
E. historical and current species-specific levels and patterns of harvest and mortality (e.g. age, sex) from all sources combined	Steps 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	no relevant indicator
F. management measures currently in place and proposed, including adaptive management strategies and consideration of levels of compliance	Step 8.	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	full consideration of guidelines	no relevant indicator
G. population monitoring	Steps 6, 7 and 8	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	no relevant indicator
H. conservation status	Steps 4 and 6	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	no relevant indicator
Article IV, paragraph 2 (b)					
a Management Authority of the State of export is satisfied that the specimen was not obtained in contravention of the laws of that State for the protection of fauna and flora [i.e. Legal Acquisition Findings – LAF]	Step 3	full consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines	partial consideration of guidelines

Following the presentation of the detailed matrix, the following feedback was received at the stakeholder workshop:

- Appropriate certification schemes may provide relevant field-based resource assessment and monitoring information that complements and fill-in potentially limited resources and capacities available for conducting NDFs, supporting CITES SAs.
- Third-party certification schemes imply the regular field audit, which may help to confirm the NDF or provide additional information.
- Detailed, robust species and area management plans required by relevant certification schemes may help preventing potential trade restrictions in future, creating a positive influence on trade.
- Appeal to importing companies that may also have more confidence if a third party has also audited wild collection to ensure that it is legal and sustainable.
- Certification schemes have traceability built into their requirements which would help CITES MAs to make LAFs.
- Certification schemes tend to have principles relating to benefit-sharing, customary rights and ensuring benefits for collectors and their communities.

Costs and benefits of certification

Opinions on what the costs and benefits of certifying CITES listed MAP species would be were gathered from CITES MAs/SAs and industry during the online questionnaire and the two-day workshop. In order for a certification approach to work, the balance has to be more towards benefits. These can be tangible and intangible, for example the costs of certification, or the potential savings in time and effort spent in preparing the documents for making NDFs when VCS data are made available. Combined responses from both the online survey and workshop survey gave the following benefits and costs of certification related to CITES listed MAP species:

Benefits:

CITES Authorities responses:

- "Free", useful and reliable information
- Reduction in processing time
- Reduction of the perception of CITES hindering trade
- Communication between industry and authorities can benefit both and improve quality
- Assisting the Review of Significant Trade (RST) process
- Support of livelihoods

Industry stakeholder responses:

- Assurance of quality products
- Provides transparency and confidence to consumers
- Ease of access to markets
- Clarity of full supply chain
- Assurance of sustainability
- Prestige and recognition from the government
- Certification label can make product more desirable
- VCS data can ease the compliance with CITES processes and increase efficiency and confidence
- Time taken by compliance with CITES requirements can be reduced, certification can create knowledge on how to comply
- Create the confidence of investors in company, both for industry and consumers
- Help with rectifying what CITES is often mis-perceived for
- Create space for collaboration with other companies
- Risk mitigation
- Brand-holder confidence
- Potential to overcome trade restrictions and possible de-regulation, de-listing of species (supported by self-regulation/voluntary compliance)
- Business planning opportunities (new products and new markets when there is more through thinking about the ingredients in supply chains)
- Potential of reducing corruption through more capacity in government authorities and certification body involved
- Creating atmosphere of trust between governments and businesses
- There is more leverage on ensuring the quality of VCS and compliance, than of CITES processes
- VCSs provide a strong traceability basis, strong 'Insurance' against mis-compliance
- Assurance of equitable trade and fair-trade practices

Costs and risks:

CITES Authorities responses:

- No liability for the certifier to give correct information
- Initially, it could take longer time to obtain information
- Parties with less resources could rely on certification without additionally checking
- Disadvantage for smaller companies if authorities start to require information

Industry stakeholder responses:

- Financial costs of certification
- Too time consuming, complicated and too much administration
- Ongoing maintenance of certification label (compliance and audit)
- Non-conformities can be revealed with additional sustainability requirements
- Lack of knowledge from certification schemes on some specific products, ingredients or species
- Different schemes might confuse consumers/companies
- Standards can change creating the risk of reliance on supplies
- Information sharing

- Ingredients can become more expensive
- Regulatory burden
- Reputational risk being associated with a certain certification that is not keeping up with their promises

In summary, the majority of discussions and responses to questionnaires showed that both **industry and CITES Authorities consider certification as potentially useful in playing a role in the implementation of CITES for Appendix II-listed MAP species**. The main benefits that both groups saw were that sharing of verified information would lead to greater knowledge and that this could speed up the permitting process.

Suitability of CITES Appendix II species for certification

During the research phase of this project, it was clear that for some species the application of voluntary certification standards to support the implementation of CITES may be more suitable than for others. This is also likely to apply to those species not currently CITES-listed. A range of factors were considered to assess the suitability of species for certification in relation to CITES implementation in discussions with CITES government agencies and industry. Surprisingly there was a lot of overlap between the CITES government agencies and industry opinions, so the outcomes are presented together. Species that were considered more suitable for, or likely to benefit from, application of VCS would have the following characteristics:

- Species traded in high volumes
- Species that are mainly wild collected and traded for commercial purposes
- Species with complicated annotations
- Species with Appendix II split listings (only some populations are listed)
- Species for which limited information is available (in particular, concerning range, population, sustainability of harvests and trade) and there is conservation concern, including species recently CITES-listed
- Species that were in the Review of Significant Trade (RST)
- Species that has suffered trade suspensions
- Species has a destination market that is interested in certified products
- High value species where the cost of certification can be easily absorbed
- Species where livelihoods would be strongly affected if trade is suspended
- Species where there are additional concerns over livelihood and social issues and voluntary certification could add an element of fair trade

Based on the analysis against these factors, the examples of CITES Appendix-II listed medicinal and aromatic plant species that may be particularly suitable include:

Aniba rosaeodora, *Euphorbia antisyphilitica*, *Nardostachys grandiflora*, *Prunus africana*, *Hydrastis canadensis*, *Galanthus* spp., *Adansonia grandidieri*, and *Panax quinquefolius*

Government agencies and industry both mentioned that certification could also be considered for species which are at risk, but not yet CITES listed as a preventative method to avoid the need for a CITES listing. A specific example of using certification as a preventative method was the genus *Boswellia* (the source of frankincense) where participants agreed that certification could prevent the necessity for a CITES listing. Additionally, discussions leaned towards using certifications as a means for promoting deregulation of trade and that certification could promote the delisting of species from the CITES Appendices.

How to operationalise the use of certification outputs to assist CITES Parties

The evidence presented so far demonstrates that, on paper, certification could help with the implementation of CITES for trade in Appendix II MAP species. But how could this work practically? The starting point is to think about how diverse the certification systems are and how the data needs for making CITES NDFs and LAFs, and the information generated by VCS application overlap. An example overview of the certification pathway is presented in Figure 3.

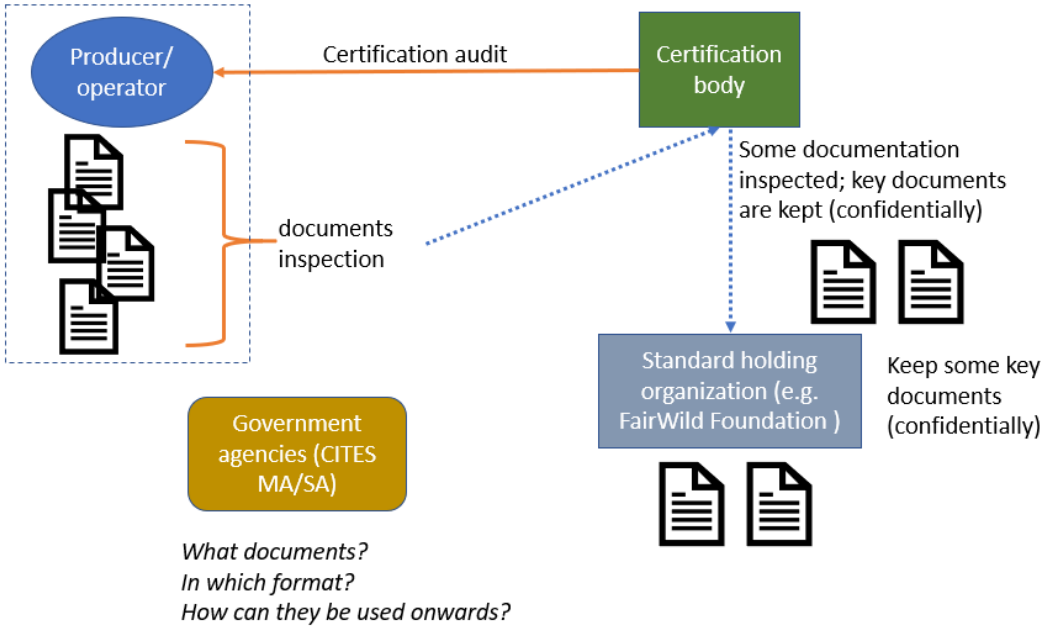

Figure 3 Example certification process and documentation sharing.

Responses from the online survey showed that half of the respondents working for CITES authorities thought that documentation provided by certifiers/companies/exporters could aid in the making of NDFs. Three quarters of respondents from CITES authorities also thought that documentation provided by certifiers/companies/exporters aid in the making of LAFs. The top five documents that respondents listed for both making NDFs and LAFs are listed in Table 2. Business were also asked if there were any restrictions on the documents that they could share with CITES MAs and SAs and 10 out of 15 industry respondents stated there were no restrictions on the documents that they could share (two respondents stated there were restrictions and three did not respond to the question).

Table 2 Top five responses from CITES authorities (from an online questionnaire) as to what documents could help them in making NDFs and LAFs.

Documentation to help with NDFs
Harvesting plan
Description of species
Population estimates
Monitoring areas and methods
Methods of collection

Documentation to help with LAFs
Proof of origin
Information on traceability systems
Unique identifiers
Reports on quantities of species used
Documents relating to local level regulation

Operationalising the use of certification within the CITES framework focused on what particular elements of the VCSs would be helpful to CITES government agencies with regard to sustainability aspects (linking to making CITES NDFs), and the other focussing on traceability aspects (linking to making CITES LAFs).

Discussions relating to NDFs were focussed around if information-sharing is possible, and between which institutions/organisations. There were diverging opinions if pre-agreements on information-sharing between CITES Authorities and standard-holding organizations, or certification bodies to this effect may be useful (risk included the outward appearance of a bias towards particular stakeholders) and possible (consider which stakeholders own and are able to share information).

It was acknowledged that a certified company is required to bring together a lot of information about its operations, including those pertaining to the sustainability of harvests and trade, consolidating it into a range of documents. Additionally, there is a benefit of field and documents checks conducted by a third party, independently, as well as the requirement (often) for such field audits to take place annually. These could be of particular relevance and usefulness when conducting NDFs. The questions discussed were which information can be shared with the national authorities, and beyond, as well as who by.

It was concluded that there may be different mechanisms of how this process could be established, including through a more formal "pre-agreement" between the government agencies and certification bodies or/and standard-holding organisations (see Figure 4). This process has a range of questions remaining to resolve, including the public perception of the process, the objectivity and risk of bias, the information ownership and sharing between companies being certified and certification bodies, and how the roles of ecosystems are dealt with in VCSs.

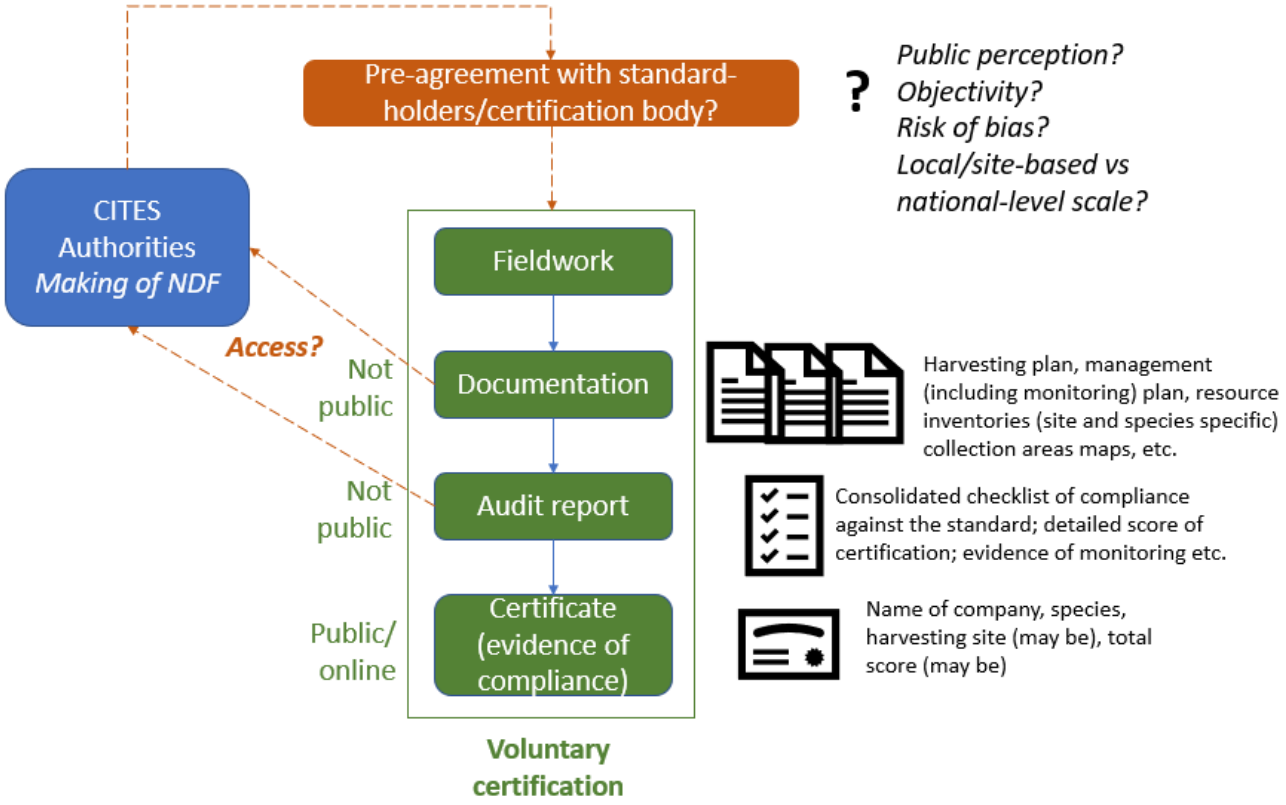

Figure 4 Example of how a pre-agreement between CITES authorities and standard holders/certifications bodies could work.

Discussions related to LAFs observed that CITES authorities look at the legality of the trade for the first time when they are issuing the LAF. They look at the national legislation (e.g. harvest permits, harvester registration information). The certification also checks legality, and there needs to be communication of the standard criteria to the authorities.

Some issues relating to LAFs that are still to be resolved include traceability being complex and there being differences between different products/species and also different levels of traceability (specific producer location, separation of certified products).

Crossover has been identified between CITES regulations and VCSs. Although there are differences in cultural background it appears to make sense for them to communicate between each other.

The main mechanisms where certification can provide support to CITES SAs/MAs that were discussed were:

- clear mechanism for SA/MA to have access to the relevant elements of the certification reports;
- impartial and reliable 'benchmarking' of the relevant certification schemes;
- clear understanding of the certification process and what 'resource inventory/monitoring' mechanisms it involves.

Conclusions

Results show that, in general, there is a positive response from stakeholders when considering if voluntary certification of CITES-listed species can assist with implementation of CITES for Appendix II wild-sourced MAP species. The standard evaluation has shown that some voluntary certification standards can already compliment the general guidance on making NDFs (Resolution Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17)), whilst others would need adjusting to fit with the CITES framework.

Suitability analysis revealed that some Appendix II-listed MAPs may benefit more from certification than others and that there is no general blanket rule. Species which are more widely traded as wild specimens, which have had a somewhat chequered past when in trade (e.g. trade suspensions or inclusion in the Review of Significant Trade), and which are mainly traded to countries where there is a market for certified products may be more likely to sustainably benefit from certification.

The results suggest that certification could support the implementation of CITES for some MAP species. Yet, operationalising such a relationship may not be easy. Results from the online questionnaire suggest that two thirds of private businesses would have no restrictions on the documents that could be shared with CITES Authorities. Even so, participants at the workshop suggested that a pre-agreement between governments and private businesses would be necessary to outline exactly how the relationship would work. There is also a clear need to have practical examples of how such synergies may work between the application of the VCSs for CITES Appendix II-listed species and the ongoing implementation of CITES requirements.

Moving Forward

A set of recommendations was developed at the stakeholder workshop on how to progress with the concept of VCSs aiding with the implementation of CITES for Appendix II-listed MAP species. These included:

- Encourage piloting the application of VCS to CITES Appendix II-listed MAPs, and consolidate lessons learnt from these experiences as case studies, to be shared with both CITES government agencies and businesses.
- Raise awareness of standard-holding organisations, CITES Authorities and industries for which certification schemes are appropriate and helpful to CITES implementation. Finalise and develop short summaries and recommendations from the analysis of VCS against CITES criteria; develop the recommendations in the VCSs analysed regarding the gaps identified to the relevant standard-holding organisations, based on the analysis.
- Raise attention of the topic discussed in the CITES context to emphasise the opportunities (as well as risks) that the use of voluntary market mechanisms brings to the implementation of CITES. The appropriate CITES fora could include Plants Committee, CITES CoP, and specific intersessional working groups (e.g. on CITES & livelihoods). Once more experiences around the use of VCS for CITES-listed species is available, develop relevant “NDF guidance” and “LAF guidance” based on the experiences and submit to CITES.
- Support the development of communication/fact sheets on what CITES is and isn’t, on CITES being a tool to support sustainable and legal trade; and how in certain circumstances voluntary certification can assist CITES implementation.

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