



ON THE WAY TO CITES CoP20: CITES' ROLE AND THE EU'S OBJECTIVES

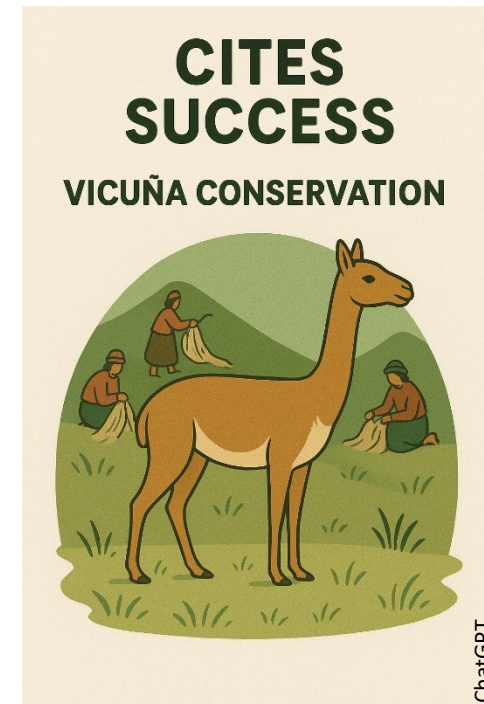
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WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE UNDER CITES?

- International trade in CITES-listed species is legal and sustainable, conducted in full compliance with the Convention, is consistent with the long-term conservation of species, and supports Sustainable Development.*
- Decisions should be supported by the best available science and information.*
- Parties and others can achieve this by **aligning formal** (e.g. laws and property rights) **and informal institutional arrangements** (e.g., codes of conduct, sanctions) at each stage of, and along, supply chains.
- Vicuña – a great example! Conservation model considers vicuña life history and ecology, socio-cultural factors, multi-level governance (local to international, including CITES), land tenure, resource access, benefits to communities, economic factors, and technology (Lichtenstein & Ros 2021).



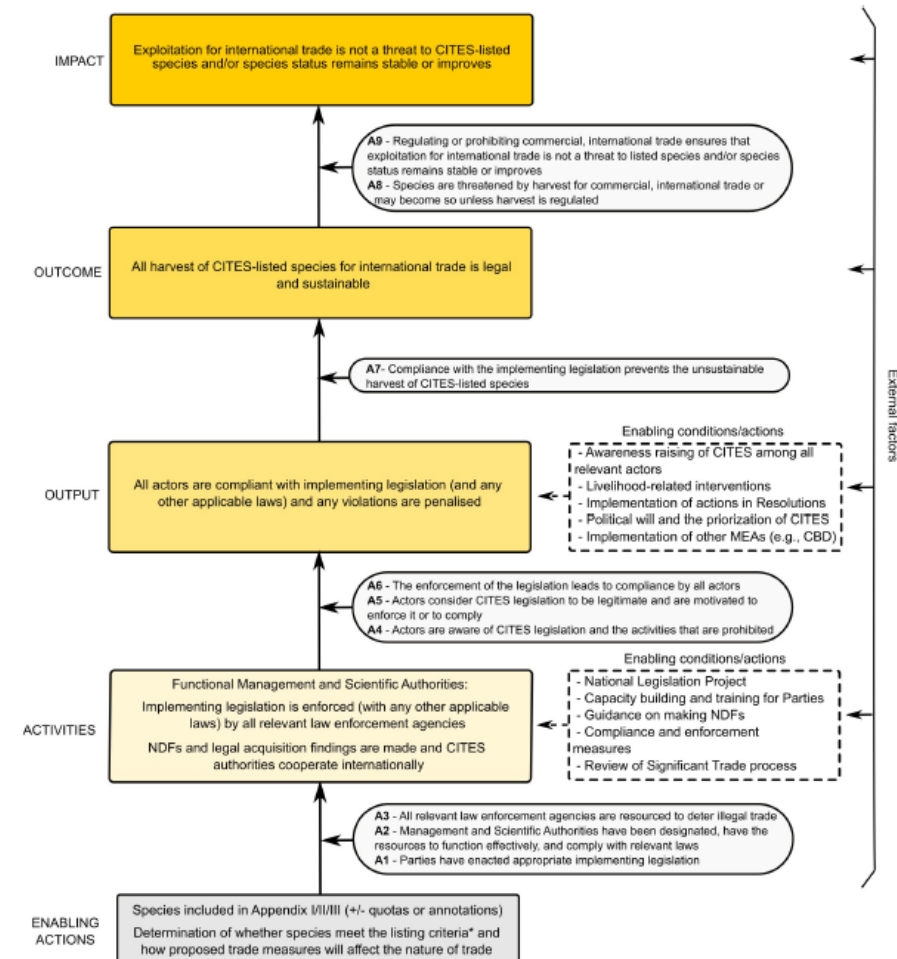
*Adapted from the CITES Strategic Vision (2021-2030) and Strategic Goals.

WHY IS CITES NOT WORKING FOR SOME SPECIES?

Based on a recent review of the Convention:

- Weak legal frameworks (e.g., hunting vs. trade).
- Insufficient public awareness of which species and derivatives are included under CITES.
- Perceived illegitimacy of implementing laws (or parts thereof).
- Lack of consultation with resource users and other key actors during policy formulation.
= Lack of institutional alignment.
- Resource deficiencies for law enforcement and management – in most regions of the world.

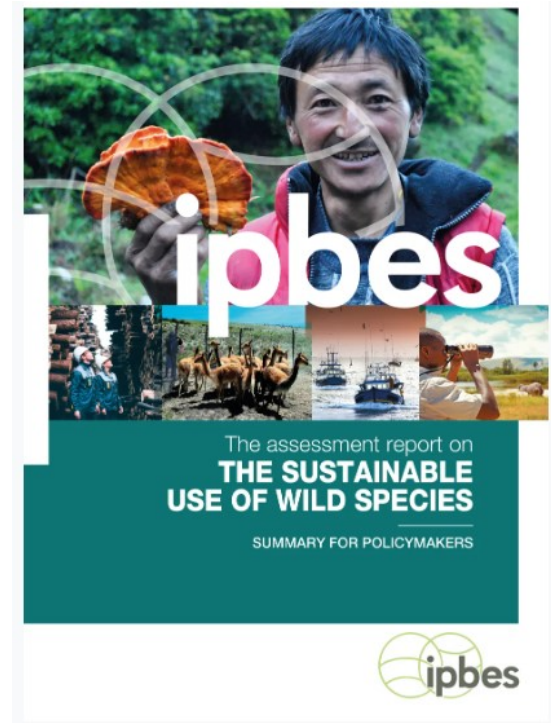
CITES Theory of Change



TOWARD EU OBJECTIVES FOR CITES COP20

Some important points to consider:

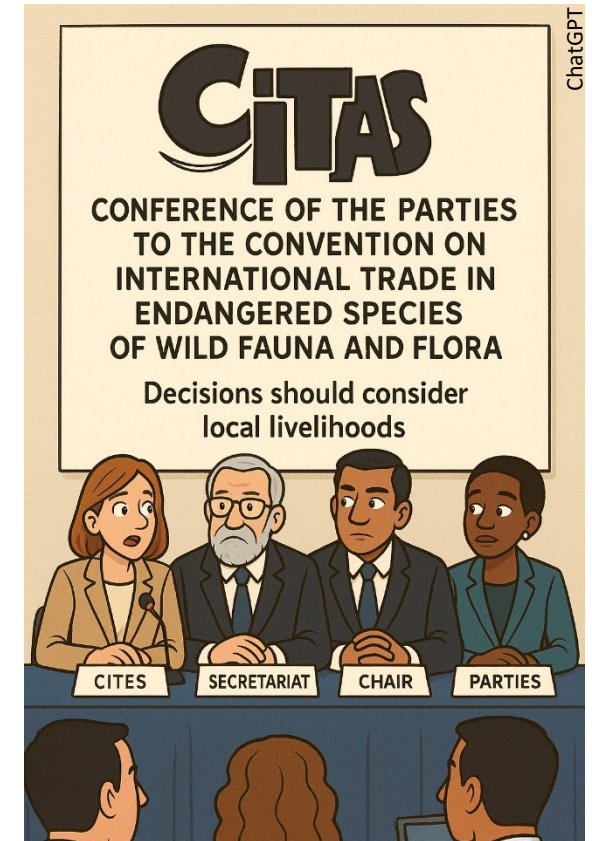
- Recognising the **funding landscape** (e.g. US and UK funding cuts) and that many CITES Parties want **trade not aid** related to managing their wildlife.
- Recognising that CITES trade controls (especially bans) can be **positive or negative** for species and people, and this can, and does, change spatio-temporally.
- Recognising that interventions **tailored to the social-ecological context** are most effective at preventing the overexploitation of species in use and trade (IPBES 2022).
- And, recognising that **criminalising wildlife trade** may produce **sub-optimal outcomes** in the long term – much like the war on drugs (Challender et al. 2025).



TOWARD EU OBJECTIVES FOR CITES COP20

Based on analyses of CITES listing proposals in the last ~20 years (2007-2025):

- Proposals have not considered the impact of decisions on local people well enough, if at all.
- Most proposals include little information that indigenous peoples, local communities, and other stakeholders have been consulted on proposals.
- Proposals do not consider market size, consumer demand, or price trends adequately: what if markets are growing, demand is inelastic, and an App I listing is proposed?
- Feedback mechanisms have been considered in few proposals only.



EU'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE CITES COP20 MEETING*

- Develop positions + take decisions, based on best available science and information.
- Support adoption of guidance on consulting IPLCs on listing proposals (CoP20 Doc. 27.)

Regarding amendments to the CITES Appendices:

- **Go beyond the ecological** and consider broader system characteristics. E.g., property rights, multi-level governance arrangements, harvest incentives, benefits to people.
- Consider whether **resource users have been consulted** on proposals or not and the likely impact of this on outcomes.
- **Consider feedback effects**, especially for trade bans. Will bans realistically help or hinder conservation (e.g., by signalling scarcity to markets)? How mitigate the risks?
- Consider dissenting views on the management of species, especially range states, and **seek out win-win compromises** (e.g., split-listing, revised proposals for CoP21).
- Make decisions that will allow for more **progress at the national level**, especially range states with good conservation records (e.g., split-listing, use of annotations).

*These align with CITES Res. Conf. 8.3 (Rev. CoP13), Res. Conf. 16.6 (Rev. CoP18), and the Revised EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking.

References:

Challender, DWS. et al. (2025). A theory of change to improve conservation outcomes through CITES. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2025.1425267>.

IPBES (2022). Summary for Policymakers of the Thematic Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6425599>.

Lichtenstein, G. & Ros, C. (2021). Vicuña conservation and the reinvigoration of Indigenous communities in the Andes. In: Nayak, P (Ed.). *Making Commons Dynamic – Understanding Change Through Commonisation and Decommonisation*. Routledge, London, pp.102-122.

Thank you for listening. Any questions?

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