

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



Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Johannesburg (South Africa), 24 September - 5 October 2016

Species specific matters

REGIONAL COOPERATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF
AND TRADE IN THE QUEEN CONCH (*STROMBUS GIGAS*)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following interrelated decisions on regional cooperation on management of and trade in the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*):

Directed to the range States of Strombus gigas

- 16.141 *Range States of Strombus gigas are encouraged to adopt and, where applicable, move towards implementation of the recommendations made by the Queen Conch Expert Workshop (Miami, United States of America, 22-24 May 2012), as reviewed, amended and validated by the Working Group on Queen Conch of the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC), the Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA, Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), and expressed in the Declaration of Panama City (25 October 2012).*
- 16.142 *Range States are encouraged to participate in the development of national, subregional and regional plans for the management and conservation of S. gigas and to share information and collaborate on:*
- a) best practices and guidance for the making of non-detriment findings for trade in S. gigas in compliance with Article IV of the Convention;*
 - b) relevant national, subregional and regional legislation; and*
 - c) enforcement issues, including illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU).*
- 16.143 *Range States of S. gigas should:*
- a) in coordination with the Working Group on Queen Conch mentioned in Decision 16.141, develop conversion factors at different levels of processing of S. gigas for standardization of data and reporting instruments on the catch and trade in meat and other products;*
 - b) adopt these conversion factors by the end of 2015 and report them to all range States of S. gigas, FAO and the CITES Secretariat; and*
 - c) by the end of 2016, apply the agreed conversion factors in their S. gigas fishery management and national, regional and international reporting, and include the degree of processing of S. gigas products in the description field of the export permit.*

- 16.144 *Range States of S. gigas should collaborate in exploring ways to enhance the traceability of specimens in international trade, including, but not limited to, catch certificates, labelling systems and the application of genetic techniques.*
- 16.145 *Range States of S. gigas should collaborate in developing and implementing joint research programmes at subregional level to support the making of non-detriment findings and public education programmes.*
- 16.146 *Range States of S. gigas should provide information to the Secretariat to allow it to report at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in accordance with Decision 16.148.*

Directed to the Secretariat

- 16.147 *The Secretariat shall:*
- a) *invite FAO and other relevant international and regional bodies to provide assistance to range States of S. gigas in order to enhance the capacity of their Scientific Authorities to make non-detriment findings, through the provision of training, technical support, the establishment and promotion of best practices and standards, and research support;*
 - b) *make existing examples of best practices, guidance and other relevant information for the making of non-detriment findings for trade in S. gigas available on the CITES website, and notify Parties accordingly;*
 - c) *communicate conversion factors and guidance for reporting on trade in S. gigas to the Parties, encouraging them to specify these conversion factors in their annual reports; and*
 - d) *collaborate with FAO to assist range States and Parties as necessary in applying conversions factors, and in improving harmonization of reporting to CITES and FAO.*
- 16.148 *On the basis of information provided in accordance with Decision 16.146, and in consultation with the range States of S. gigas, the Working group on Queen Conch mentioned in Decision 16.141 and FAO, the Secretariat shall report on the progress in the implementation of these Decisions at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Implementation of CoP16 Decisions

3. Pursuant to Decision 16.147 a) and d), and in support of the implementation of Decisions 16.141, 16.142 and 16.143, the CITES Secretariat concluded in 2014 a UN Agency to UN Agency Contribution Agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for a joint capacity building project on queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) in the Caribbean region. The objectives of the project included:
- i) the development and testing of model non-detriment findings (NDF) for trade in the queen conch;
 - ii) the participatory development of a Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan;
 - iii) the organization of discussions to reaching agreement at the regional level on conversion factors for queen conch at different processing grades of meat and its derivatives;
 - iv) the collection of information on catch statistics, stock information, national management plans and regulations that relate to queen conch fisheries, management, conservation and trade, and circulation of this information between queen conch range States;
 - v) the dissemination of the project outcomes through press messages and reports to CITES, FAO, SPAW and queen conch range States in order to increase capacity and awareness; and
 - vi) the provision of support to a national capacity building workshop on NDFs in Honduras.
4. The project further supported the organization of the second meeting of the joint CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch (QCWG), which took place from 18 to 20 November 2014 in Panama City. The meeting reviewed a draft Regional Queen Conch Management and Conservation Plan with 26 potential fisheries management measures, and determined which measures will contribute most to the sustainability of the stocks and livelihoods of those involved in queen conch fisheries in the region. The meeting reached expert agreement on the use of regional harmonized

conversion factors for the various degrees of processing of conch meat and on a format for non-detriment finding (NDFs) assessments. The meeting also updated the Terms of Reference of the Working Group and prepared a new workplan. The draft report of the meeting was made available as document [AC28 Inf. 30](#) at the 28th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC28, Tel Aviv, 2015).

5. The results of the second QCWG meeting included: a NDF guideline format for trade in Caribbean queen conch (Annex 6 of the meeting report); regional conversion factors for processed queen conch to live weight (Annex 7); and draft recommendations on a regional plan for the management and conservation of queen conch in the WECAFC area (Annex 4). The latter will be considered by WECAFC at its 16th meeting (Guadeloupe, June 2016).
6. From 12 to 13 March 2015, Colombia organized the International Regional Cooperation Workshop for the Management and Trade of Queen Conch (*Strombus gigas*) on San Andrés Island, Colombia. This workshop refined and further advanced the outcomes of the second QCWG meeting.
7. At AC28, Colombia submitted document [AC28 Doc. 19](#) on Regional Cooperation on the Management of and Trade in Queen Conch (*Strombus Gigas*), consolidating information on the implementation of Decisions 16.141 to 16.145 from eight countries, as well as the results of the two international workshops mentioned in paragraph 4 to 6.
8. The status of implementation of the CoP16 Decisions directed to the range States of *Strombus gigas* is summarized below.

Implementation of Decision 16.141

9. When developing the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan, relevant existing measures and recommendations, and the implementation (or lack of implementation) thereof, were analysed and taken into consideration. As such, the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan incorporated or superseded many of the earlier recommendations that are quoted in Decision 16.141. By adopting and implementing the new Regional Plan, the range States of *S. gigas* are accomplishing what Decision 16.141 encouraged them to do (see also paragraph 10).

Implementation of Decision 16.142

10. OSPESCA and CRFM endorsed (in March and May 2016 respectively) the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan that was developed and finalized by the QCWG with the help of the above mentioned project and meetings, coupled to extensive consultations with fishers, experts and policymakers. It is expected that the Plan will also be endorsed by WECAFC at its 16th meeting (Guadeloupe, June 2016). The Secretariat will provide an oral update on the outcomes of that meeting. Among other matters, the Regional Plan contains provisions concerning the making of non-detriment findings for trade in *S. gigas*, legislation, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and enforcement, as envisaged in paragraphs a) to c) of Decision 16.142.
11. Furthermore, Colombia notes in document AC28 Doc. 19 that:

According to the proposal in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan (workshops in Panama and Colombia), range States should present and integrate sustainability criteria within their national, regional and subregional management and conservation plans in order to ensure both environmentally and economically favourable fishing, involving fishermen and other key actors in their development. In addition, consideration should be given to having licences for artisanal fishing with responsibilities, in accordance with the Regional Plan, including submitting catch reports.

Moreover, with regard to monitoring-related measures, steps should be taken to: increase the frequency of free-diving and adopt strict regulations for independent diving techniques; to use the VMS system for boats longer than 10 m; and to carry out organized patrols.

12. The NDF guidance developed by FAO (see paragraph 5) was presented and discussed at the second QCWG meeting, and finalized early in 2015 (see Annex 6 of document AC28 Inf. 30).
13. The NDF guidance was endorsed by OSPESCA and CRFM at their meetings in 2016, and is expected to be endorsed for all queen conch range States by WECAFC at its upcoming meeting. Once approved, the

Secretariat will make the NDF guidance and other relevant information available on the CITES website, as directed in Decision 16.147, paragraph b).

14. FAO organized a national workshop on industrial fisheries of queen conch in Honduras on 27-28 August 2015, which focused on capacity building for the making of NDFs, and on the implementation of relevant measures of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan in Honduras.
15. At the request of some Parties, the CITES Secretariat, in its presentation for WECAFC's 16th meeting, will highlight, among other issues, IUU fishing of queen conch in the region, and Honduras' long-term scientific export quota for *S. gigas*.

Implementation of Decision 16.143

16. Based on the meeting reports and project indicated above, the implementation of Decision 16.143 is summarized by Colombia in document AC28 Doc. 19 as follows:

The first meeting of the CFMC/OSPESCA/COPACO/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch (Panama City, Panama, October 2012), the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (Bangkok, Thailand, March 2013) and the 15th session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, March 2014) all highlighted the need for harmonized terminology and conversion factors for the Queen Conch (Strombus gigas). In particular, the session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission approved a recommendation, which stated that: "Members of Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission work towards determining and adopting national conversion factors based on regionally agreed processing grades and terminologies before the end of 2015 and communicate the adoption formally to the FAO and CITES Secretariats."

The results of field studies reported in the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. 1042 regarding new field studies carried out in 2014, and the data available from different countries that have already been published, suggest regional conversion factors for different processing grades for the entire Western-Central Atlantic (FAO Fishing Area 31):

Processing grade	Conversion factor
Dirty	5.3
50% clean	7.9
100% clean	13.2

[...]

According to the proposal in the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan (workshops in Panama and Colombia), it was concluded that the proposed regional factors are the minimum to standardize information on the regional production of the species. It is recognized that due to the spatial variability and the characteristics of the species, it is important that countries consider it a priority to have their own conversion factors. When determining conversion factors, it is important to consider other key factors for the management and the sustainability of the resource, such as the weight of the animal without the shell or the number of individuals. FAO has a protocol for expressing the so-called nominal weight in production, that is to say the weight of the entire shell, but a complementary protocol is also needed to specify how to determine the other two factors proposed. Colombia, Dominican Republic and Panama have expressed interest in working together on this protocol.

17. The report of the second meeting of the QCWG (see document [AC28 Inf. 30](#)) provided further guidance on the matter of conversion factors as follows:

Countries and territories that had already established their national conversion factor should continue to apply them in order to calculate the live weight and inform FAO of the conversion factor applied. However, countries and territories without national conversion factors should apply the regional

conversion factor relevant to the processing grade in which they collect the data in order to raise them to live weight.

With the purpose of finally having all catch data in live weight by applying the appropriate conversion factor for the relevant processing grade, countries and territories that have not yet submitted complete information are requested to report as soon as possible to FAO in which processing grade their past data had been submitted or provide the whole historical data series on queen conch harvest in live weight according to either the national or the regional conversion factors.

Countries should continue to collect weight data by processing grades to update and improve the agreed regional conversion factors and for other possible additional conversion factors (e.g. 85 per cent clean), which are used in some countries.

18. The regional conversion factors were endorsed by OSPESCA and CRFM in 2016, and are expected to be endorsed for all queen conch range states by WECAFC at its 16th meeting. The Secretariat will then communicate the agreed conversion factors and reporting guidance to the Parties, as instructed in Decision 16.147, paragraph c).

Implementation of Decision 16.144

19. The Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan proposes to establish national queen conch product traceability schemes in line with catch certification standard requirements. Other proposed measures with implications for traceability include: (i) the licensing of all queen conch fishers, processors and exporters; (ii) the development and progressive implementation of a certification programme to promote legal conch consumption in the wider Caribbean; and (iii) the development and implementation of a digital catch and effort data entry and analysis system (see Table 7 in document [AC28 Inf. 30](#)). These recommendations were endorsed at second QCWG meeting, and are reflected in the QCWG's work plan for 2015-2018 as follows: "*To begin a review of options for development of an auditable "chain of custody" procedure to track catches from their catch location to their eventual destination.*"
20. Colombia further provided the following regional conclusions concerning traceability of queen conch in document AC28 Doc. 19:
 - All of the constituents of the value chain should be known to enable tracking of the entire product process;
 - Among the mechanisms to be implemented, ecological certification stamps should be highlighted, as they guarantee the sustainability of productions and consumption and would also be an incentive for fishermen to generate catch data; and
 - Pilot projects with local communities should be implemented.
21. A recent study, undertaken by TRAFFIC for the CITES Secretariat, reviews CITES traceability schemes that have been developed for trade in products and derivatives of certain Appendix-II listed species, including existing traceability systems for queen conch (see document SC66 Inf. 11, section 4.3 and table 7).
22. When developing traceability systems for queen conch, *S. gigas* range States could examine how this work may contribute to discussions on the need for a broader traceability framework within CITES, as proposed in document CoP17 Doc. 45, and share relevant experiences. The Secretariat reports on general progress and other activities related to traceability in this document, along with draft decisions that call upon the Parties, the Standing Committee and the Secretariat to consider the issue of traceability systems for trade in CITES-listed species.

Implementation of Decision 16.145

23. Various research efforts involving multiple range States concerning conversion factors and NDF guidance are mentioned above. It should be noted that the QCWG itself assists in promoting and generating joint research, which is often cooperatively conducted by individual experts, research centres or universities. There is however no comprehensive overview of subregional research that range States may have collaborated on.

24. Regarding public education, the Regional Plan recognizes that education and user outreach programmes concerning the conservation of and trade in queen conch should continue. It provides the following guidance:
- Education programmes should be implemented, focusing on communities, fishermen, consumers (local and foreign), traders, managers and other actors in the resource chain; and
 - Educational programmes on the sustainable catching, trade, control and consumption of the queen conch should be introduced.
25. A number of range States (e.g. Colombia, France and Mexico) have conducted awareness-raising activities concerning queen conch in recent years. The Secretariat has no information on their impact or success, or on the extent to which the recommendations concerning public education have been implemented elsewhere. The Secretariat will provide an oral update at the present meeting of the Conference of the Parties in case it becomes aware of new relevant facts.

Implementation of Decision 16.146

26. Colombia reached out to all the range States of *S. gigas* to seek information on their implementation of Decisions 16.141 to 16.145, and compiled their replies in document AC28 Doc. 19. This information, in combination with the outputs of the projects and workshops indicated above, provided the Secretariat with a good basis for the present progress report. The Secretariat further consulted with range States during the international workshops in Panama City and San Juan, and communicated regularly with FAO regarding the implementation of the Decisions, and for the production of this report.
27. After the deadline for the submission of documents, the Secretariat received further information on the implementation of Decisions 16.141 to 16.145 from Belize and the United States of America, for which it is very grateful. The documents will be made available for information at the present meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Implementation of Decision 16.147

28. As mentioned in paragraph 3, pursuant to decision 16.147, paragraphs a) and d), the CITES Secretariat collaborated with FAO in undertaking a joint capacity building and research project on queen conch in the Caribbean region in 2014-15 which addressed the matters raised in Decision 16.147. The Secretariat further actively participated in the international workshops indicated above.
29. Pursuant to decision 16.147, paragraph b), the Secretariat developed a queen conch webpage on the CITES website where examples of best practices, guidance and other relevant information for the making of non-detriment findings for trade can be found (https://cites.org/eng/prog/queen_conch). As indicated above, the Secretariat will notify Parties pursuant to Decision 16.147, paragraph c), of regional conversion factors once these are agreed by WECAFC at its 16th meeting.

Conclusions

30. At AC28, the Animals Committee congratulated the range States of *S. gigas* for their activities, and took note of the report submitted by Colombia and the recommendations contained therein. These recommendations focus on the need for continuity in the work performed by the countries of the Caribbean region. The following areas of further collaboration and targeted action are of particular importance:
- With regard to conversion factors, range States of *S. gigas* are invited to consider developing their own conversion factor because of the spatial variability and characteristics of the species;
 - The participatory work amongst range States in the region to establish practical, appropriate guidelines and directions for the making of non-detriment findings for trade in *S. gigas*, and collect and disseminate best practice examples, should continue;
 - Every *S. gigas* range State should develop national plans of action for the management and conservation of queen conch, in which sustainability criteria should be included to ensure environmentally and economically favourable fishing. In addition, participatory work should continue for the effective implementation of the regional plan;

- With regard to improving traceability, the various components of the value and trade chains should be identified, which would enable the tracking of specimens of *S. gigas* through the entire process. Ecological certification schemes to help guarantee sustainable production and consumption, as well as pilot projects with local communities, could be developed in this regard; and
 - There remains a need for more comprehensive education and outreach programmes aimed at queen conch consumers, focusing on responsible catch, trade and consumption.
31. Based on the information outlined above and consultations with FAO, the Secretariat concludes that significant progress has been made regarding the implementation of Decisions 16.142 and 16.143 through the endorsement of regional NDF guidance, regional conversion factors and the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan. The next step will be the effective national and subregional implementation of these measures by the *S. gigas* range states. This will require capacity for the making of NDFs in different fisheries, promoting sustainable fisheries, enforcement at various levels, socio-economic incentives for complying with sound management and trade measures, and enhanced traceability. Work on the implementation of Decision 16.144 (traceability) is ongoing and needs to continue. The implementation of Decision 16.145 has progressed, and should continue.

Recommendations

32. The Secretariat considers that the recommendations referred to in Decision 16.141 were incorporated in, and overtaken by, more recent recommendations and outcomes (see paragraph 9), and therefore proposes its deletion.
33. The Secretariat considers that Decisions 16.142 and 16.143 have substantially been accomplished, and recommends that they be deleted. Decisions 16.146, 16.147 and 16.148 have been implemented, and are recommended for deletion.
34. The activities envisaged under Decisions 16.144 and 16.145 are ongoing. The Secretariat agrees with Colombia and others that it would be important that these activities, as well the areas of work indicated in paragraph 29, should continue, and that the Conference of the Parties should monitor progress. The Secretariat recommends language to this effect in the draft decisions in Annex 1 to this document. A cost estimate for the implementation of the proposed decisions is provided in Annex 2 to this document.

DRAFT DECISIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Directed to the range States of *Strombus gigas*

17.AA The range States of *Strombus gigas* shall:

- a) following the endorsement of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan by all range States, collaborate to implement the Regional Plan, and develop national Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plans as appropriate;
- b) organize national level consultations to discuss the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan, build awareness, increase buy-in of all stakeholders for implementing the measures, and contribute to future national, subregional and regional compliance;
- c) continue to collect data on weight of *S. gigas* by processing grade in order to update and improve the agreed regional conversion factors, and develop additional national conversion factors, taking into account the spatial variability and characteristics of the species;
- d) continue to collaborate in exploring ways to enhance the traceability of specimens of *S. gigas* in international trade, including, but not limited to, catch certificates, labelling systems and the application of genetic techniques, and consider sharing relevant experiences with the Secretariat, Parties and the Standing Committee, as appropriate, in the context of discussions on traceability systems for trade in CITES-listed species;
- e) collaborate in developing and implementing joint research programmes at subregional or regional level to support the making of non-detriment findings, and promote relevant research and capacity building activities through regional fisheries management bodies;
- f) promote and collaborate in developing and implementing public education and awareness programmes regarding the conservation and sustainable use of *S.gigas*; and
- g) provide information to the Secretariat on the implementation of this decision to allow it to report at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in accordance with Decision 17.DD and, as appropriate, report to the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission on the implementation of the regional plan or national plans.

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.BB On the basis of reporting by the Secretariat in compliance with Decision 17.DD, the Standing Committee shall review enforcement and traceability issues concerning international trade in queen conch, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Directed to the Animals Committee

17.CC If requested by range States of *S. gigas*, the Animals Committee shall provide advice regarding the making of non-detriment findings for trade in *S. gigas*, research in support of sustainable queen conch fishery and trade, and other technical matters.

Directed to the Secretariat

17.DD The Secretariat shall, pending the availability of external funding,

- a) continue to collaborate with FAO, the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch, WECAFC and other relevant international and regional bodies to provide assistance to range States of *S. gigas* in order to enhance the capacity of their CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, fisheries authorities and other stakeholders to implement the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan and apply the NDF guidance;

- b) monitor the development of traceability systems for queen conch; provide assistance, as appropriate, to FAO, the CFMC/OSPESCA/WECAFC/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch and others in reviewing options for the development of an auditable "chain of custody" procedure; and report relevant developments to the Standing Committee; and
- c) continue to provide assistance to range States of *S. gigas* on relevant enforcement issues, and report new developments in this regard to the Standing Committee, as appropriate.

17.DD On the basis of information provided in accordance with Decision 17.AA g), and in consultation with the range States of *S. gigas*, the Working Group on Queen Conch of the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council (CFMC), the Organización del Sector Pesquero y Acuícola del Istmo Centroamericano (OSPESCA, Organization for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector of the Central American Isthmus, the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) and FAO, the Secretariat shall report on the progress in the implementation of these Decisions at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

TENTATIVE BUDGET AND SOURCE OF FUNDING
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS OR DECISIONS

According to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP16) on *Submission of draft resolutions, draft decisions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties*, the Conference of the Parties decided that any draft resolutions or decisions submitted for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties that have budgetary and workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain or be accompanied by a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding.

The Secretariat proposes the following tentative budget and source of funding:

- A. The decisions in Annex 1, directed to the Secretariat, would be implemented in close collaboration with FAO over the period 2017-2019, subject to external funding. The activities will focus on:
- (i) supporting the CFMC/OSPESCA/COPACO/CRFM Working Group on Queen Conch to complete its remaining tasks, outlined in Appendix 9 of document [AC28 Inf. 30](#), that are pertinent to CITES, including the review of options for the development of an auditable "chain of custody" procedure to track catches from their catch location to their eventual destination;
 - (ii) supporting the implementation of the Regional Queen Conch Fisheries Management and Conservation Plan, and assisting in applying the agreed regional conversion factors;
 - (iii) enhancing capacity of queen conch range States for the making of NDFs, based on the agreed NDF guidance; and
 - (iv) assisting range States in the enforcement of provisions relevant to the international trade in *S. gigas*, including through capacity building for law enforcement, customs and fisheries officials.

The costs of undertaking the work indicated above are estimated to be 300,000 USD for three years (2017-2019). No source of funding has been identified.