

Wildlife management policies in China in 2020

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About EIA



- Offices in London and Washington, DC
- Work on a range of environmental issues: climate, ocean, forests and wildlife
- Engaged with wildlife law revision process in China since 2014

China's Wildlife Protection Law



- China's most significant piece of legislation covering conservation and use of terrestrial wild animals
- Mostly concerned with protected species, delineates different levels of protection
- Mechanisms for the commercial breeding of and trade in protected species is written into the law
- Hunting of non-protected species is permitted with a licence, and trade is permitted with proof of legal origin (e.g. hunting or import permit)

China's Wildlife Protection Law



For protected species:

- Trade may be permitted "where the sale, purchase or utilisation of wildlife under special state protection or the products thereof is necessary for scientific research, captive breeding, public exhibition or performances, heritage conservation or other special purposes" (Article 27)
- In practice, this appears to be interpreted to permit commercial trade for e.g. traditional medicine

Policy change in the wake of COVID-19



- On 26 January 2020, three government agencies issued "Notification regarding prohibition of trade in wildlife"
- Temporarily required captive wildlife facilities to quarantine, and stated "all business operations ... shall strictly prohibit trade of wildlife in any form"
- Notice was issued "in order to strictly guard against the epidemic in the new-type coronavirus and obstruct possible sources and routes of transmission"

Policy change in the wake of COVID-19



- On 24 February 2020, Decisions adopted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) prohibited commercial breeding and trade in most terrestrial wild animal species for the purposes of consumption as food
- Contrary to some media coverage, this was not a total ban on wildlife trade
- Prohibits breeding and trade in (almost) all terrestrial wild animal species, not just protected species

Policy change in the wake of COVID-19



- What is left out?
- > Aquatic wild animal species, e.g. turtles, salamanders
- Trade in captive-bred populations of species regulated as "livestock", including food and fur animals
- ➤ Breeding and trade for other purposes, such as pets, ornamental items and traditional medicine

Case study: trade in leopard bone



 Commercial trade in leopard bone is still permitted for medicinal purposes – leopards are subject to first-class special state protection, and international trade is banned





Case study: trade in leopard bone



- No transparency around origins of leopard bone and other wildlife products in legal trade – where does it come from?
- A species seriously threatened by poaching and illegal trade
- Legitimising demand for wildlife species that are seriously threatened by trafficking and for which China is primary consumer country

Case study: trade in leopard bone



 Similar mechanism and concerns in the case of medicines using pangolin scales

· Legal trade in bile of captive-bred bears and skins of captive-

bred tigers





Calls within China to end use of wildlife



- There have long been a range of voices in China calling for greater restrictions to wildlife trade and a shift to a less consumptive approach
- Since the emergence of COVID-19, further calls from Chinese academics and NGOs to extend bans to traditional medicine
- Most traditional Chinese medicine does not contain wildlife parts and many within the industry are also calling for change

Next steps



- Wildlife Protection Law will be revised this year
- Opportunity to amend provisions which legitimise commercial trade in and use of threatened species
- In doing so consolidate a newly precautionary approach to wildlife trade and consumption, and ensure a coherent approach to risk mitigation for human health

Next steps



- Government has already adopted progressive policy shift in wake of COVID-19 —if implemented effectively and ethically this could be a real step forward
- If extended to cover other forms of consumption, would see China step up as a global leader in conservation
- Could set the stage for a more successful CBD CoP

What we are doing



- Sharing policy recommendations, continuing to support calls for change from within China, ready to assist where we can
- Not just about what's happening in China, globally we need to recalibrate our relationship with the natural world
- End Pandemics alliance seeking participation from a multiple disciplines to envision a more sustainable way forward: https://endpandemics.earth/

