

Betreft: Inbreng Nederland ten behoeve van de compilatie van een background document voor de nog te organiseren WorkShop over internetrecherche en CITES.

a. The scale of nature and wildlife trade conducted via the internet that apparently involves their country;

In the previous year two reports became available that created quite a stir and triggered research by our General Inspection Service in order to verify the claim put forward by IFAW that illegal trade through the internet was teeming.

In the first half of 2007 the General Inspection Service started a project 'internet investigation'. This project was aimed particularly at animal well-being (pets) and trade in wild fauna (CITES).

The project had been set up in a way that promotes the information position of the General Inspection Service. Trained inspectors investigate proactively, using modern techniques on the Internet to look for (indications for) offences. If there are sufficient grounds for suspicion the investigation was handed over to a specialised investigation team of the General Inspection Service, The Food and Veterinary Office, customs authorities and police force.

The preliminary results show there is still a world to be gained. In fact trade on the Internet was a large (conscious) blind spot. With the project more insight was gained on trade in household pets and CITES-specimens. The results are important not only for enforcement purposes but also for policy matters. Stories and tales in the media concerning illegal, unlimited and uncontrolled trade through the internet led also to political attention. With the gained insight it is possible to defuse to some extent the stories mostly propagated by certain NGO's.

The Project outcome confirmed there was lively trade on the internet most of which was legal in nature or could not be claimed illegal based on the information provided in the advertisements. Several surveys show (amongst which one of IFAW (caught in the web)) that illegal trade forms just a fraction of the million of private adds placed daily on the web. Only a handful of those adds have a relationship with trade in CITES specimens. Most of these adds are legal in nature. More often than not it can not be determined on the basis of the add whether illegality is at play. In most cases the reason is sellers are not aware of existing regulation. For that reason a project has been started in collaboration with internet providers such as e-bay to raise awareness (this is explained in more detail under section c).

b. Any real of perceived problems related to such trade, including illicit trade;

General conclusions/assumption is that many individuals use the internet to sell items (usually old stuff) that are inherited or 'found on grandma's attic'. In addition it is concluded that many private individuals are not aware (ignorant) of the regulations and the restrictions that go with it. Within this group, knowledge on what and under what conditions animals are allowed to be sold is limited.

For this group a project is being carried out with the goal to raise awareness. Collaboration is sought with internet providers, they seem very willing to assist. Suspected illegal trade is reported to a central information point within the General Inspection Service. They make a first assessment whether actually an offence is being committed (not an easy task because of the many clauses and

exemptions etc). More often than not it is not indicated whether the seller is in the possession of the owner certificates.

The use of the internet by (organised) traders is more sophisticated. Within this group methods are used to avoid the search engines used by the investigators to detect (possible) crime. In order to trace the offenders in this group special techniques are necessary and can only be done with specialist knowledge. This first results are becoming available but are subject to further investigation.

Finally there is also a category of swindlers, who offer protected species for sale but have no intention to deliver the animals (they might or even might not be in their possession). Pure fraud.

As of May 2007; 55 case have been examined. Most was related to birds of prey.

c. The nature and effectiveness of any measures that parties have taken to regulate the trade of wildlife via internet, including the use of codes of conduct;

We do not consider Internet principally differently from ordinary markets. It is a relatively new medium which we do not treat differently than traditional 'markets' where CITES specimens are traded. The prohibition to sell through the internet is not the answer. However, we try to make agreements with providers and owners of sites. Efforts are aimed at the raising of public awareness.

Considering the fact it is a relatively new medium we are in a learning process how to develop expertise and knowledge in order to be able to conduct useful investigations.

For the group of private persons (sellers and buyers) a project is being carried out in order to raise public awareness. Collaboration is sought with internet providers, they seem very willing to assist. Suspected illegal trade is reported to a central information point within the Dutch General Inspection Service (AID). They make a first assessment whether actually an offence is being committed (which is not an easy task because of the many clauses and exemptions etc). Often it is not clearly indicated whether the seller is in the possession of the required CITES permits or certificates. In this project we are working together towards a code of conduct on how to guide/inform potential sellers of CITES specimens. A clear link to the authorized authorities web-sites (CITES MA, Customs, AID etc.) where all necessary information is provided, forms part of this.

The cooperation with one of the largest websites involved in the project has proven to have been successful already. This internet provider had added information on its site, in the animals category, concerning the acquisition of exotic animals and parts and derivatives thereof. In their text they give a clear explanation of the CITES and the Dutch Flora- and fauna Act. They give hyperlinks to all authorized authorities. And they warn the visitor they will delete the advertisement if they suspect illegal trade and forward it to the AID for further investigation.

d. Any changes in trade routes, species in trade and methods of shipment that have been observed as a result of increased use of the internet to promote trade in wildlife.

No information provided