

# Sustainable Use of Biodiversity: The case of bushmeat hunting

NeFo CBD Fact Sheet in preparation of CBD-SBSTTA-20, 4/2016



Women in Benin, West Africa, drying seeds of *Parkia biglobosa* © Katja Heubach



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Sustainable use of biodiversity and its components is one of the three major goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Article 2 of the Convention defines sustainable use as “the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations”. General recommendations for sustainable use were agreed on through the Addis Abeba-Principles in 2004. During its 20th meeting in April 2016, the Subsidiary Body of Technical, Technological and Scientific Advice to the CBD (SBSTTA-20) will revisit this subject, with a special focus on bushmeat.

## BACKGROUND

Particularly in tropical and subtropical countries, the use of wildlife, especially bushmeat hunting, is among the major threats to local biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. The loss of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians can lead to defaunation or empty forests as the most evident impact of overhunting, and prey depletion triggers shifts in entire food webs and, thus, species composition of ecosystems. Forests cannot regenerate as important pollinators and seed dispersers are missing. These changes eventually can greatly alter ecosystem functions which, in turn, also could lead to alterations with regard to the provision of ecosystem goods and services essential for human well-being.

Bushmeat hunting refers to the harvesting of wild terrestrial animals in tropical and subtropical countries<sup>1</sup>. It is recognized as a legitimate source of protein for indigenous peoples and local communities, providing up to 80 per cent of the protein in rural diets in tropical developing countries. In Central Africa alone, it is estimated that over 4 million tons of bushmeat are consumed each year, increasingly also in urban areas<sup>2</sup>. Thus, bushmeat hunting is an urgent concern for food security and nutrition.

Additionally, for many indigenous peoples and local communities, wildlife also offers a source of income to meet other rudimentary needs. Wildlife is also recognized as an essential part of the spirituality of indigenous peoples, worldview and identity.

## Facts on bushmeat hunting and wildlife use

The CBD Secretariat just prepared a review on regional subsistence use of wild species and their impacts on the survival and regeneration of wild species<sup>3</sup>. Drawn from its findings, declining numbers of bushmeat species are present in all tropical forest areas. They pose severe threats to human food security, nutrition, health, local livelihoods as well as national economies.

The most important and salient reasons for unsustainable hunting as reported by the study are:

- Lack of knowledge about the hunted species, in terms of basic ecology and vital rates;
- Insecurity, inadequate policy frameworks, weak governance, and lack of respect for laws and enforcement, unregulated national and international market for bushmeat;
- Erosion of the traditional control over access to land and of the traditional sets of local regulations governing hunting by members of the local communities;
- Strong commercial interests in some species;
- Companies can cause impacts on wild species by directly damaging critical habitats, disturbing movement patterns and altering behaviour, and indirectly by providing access to hunters by building roads and/or providing transportation for hunters;

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<sup>1</sup> Definition by the CBD Liaison Group on Bushmeat; quoted after UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/11

<sup>2</sup> UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/11

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<sup>3</sup> UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/INF/46

- Ongoing growth of human population and trade from rural to urban areas, lack of any substantial domestic meat sector;
- Lack of livelihood and productive alternative;
- Other anthropogenic impacts include deforestation and infrastructure expansion, climate change, pollution, and effects of invasive species.

## INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES RELATING TO THE USE OF WILDLIFE, ESPECIALLY BUSHMEAT HUNTING

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** Sustainable use of biodiversity is one of the three main objectives of the CBD (Article 1). Article 2 of the Convention defines sustainable use as “the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity, thereby maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations”. In 2004, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD agreed on the Addis-Ababa Principles (decision VII/12)<sup>4</sup> which provide general recommendations for sustainable management. While there is no specific Aichi Biodiversity Target relating to the sustainable use of terrestrial wildlife set in the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, wildlife is inherently interconnected within many of the issues the Plan aims to address. In the current discussions of SBSTTA a special focus lies on bushmeat, being directed by the CBD Liaison Group on Bushmeat.
- **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):** In July 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 69/314 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, in which it emphasized that “the protection of wildlife must be part of a comprehensive approach to achieve poverty eradication, food security, sustainable development, including the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, economic growth, social well-being and sustainable livelihoods.

- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** In goal 15, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>5</sup> refers to ending poaching and wildlife trafficking: Target 15.7 reads as “take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products”. Target 15.c highlights the need to “enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.”
- **Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW):** The Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) is a voluntary partnership of 13 international organisations<sup>6</sup> which was established in 2013 in response to decision XI/25 of the CBD on sustainable use of biodiversity with special regard to bushmeat and sustainable wildlife management. The main objective of the CPW is to strengthen cooperation and coordination among its members and other interested parties to promote the sustainable use and conservation of terrestrial vertebrate wildlife in all biomes and geographic areas. The current CPW work plan for the period 2015-2016 includes four integral thematic areas: wildlife and food security; human-wildlife conflict; illegal and unsustainable hunting (wildlife crime); and animal and human health. In order to complement these areas, priority attention is placed on equitable and effective governance of wildlife, and on ensuring that the values of wildlife are recognized and addressed in decision-making at all levels. In 2015, the CPW released a sourcebook on bushmeat<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

<sup>6</sup> CPW consists of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (ICG), the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO), the wildlife trade monitoring network (TRAFFIC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/wildlife-partnership/bushmeat-sourcebook/87946/en/>. Further

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sustainable/addis.shtml>.

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## CHALLENGES & ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO REGULATING BUSHMEAT HUNTING AND WILDLIFE USE REPORTED BY PARTIES OF THE CBD

In April 2015, the CBD Secretariat sent out a notification to CBD member states calling for submitting information regarding bushmeat and sustainable wildlife management related to terrestrial vertebrates, including, amongst others, information on impacts of subsistence use of wildlife on the survival and regeneration of wild species, and the impacts of legal and illegal hunting on wildlife use of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The CBD Secretariat evaluated the information received in relation to this call, together with the parties' Fifth National reports and the updates of their National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans (NBSAPs), and collected insights regarding challenges faced in tackling unsustainable bushmeat hunting and the activities undertaken to overcome them<sup>8</sup>.

Challenges with regard to unsustainable bushmeat hunting comprise:

- Habitat loss, deforestation and forest degradation
- Limited awareness of threatened and non-threatened species
- Lack of knowledge of economically and ecologically important wildlife species
- Human wildlife conflict
- Weak and fragmented approaches to law enforcement, corruption, weak legal and judicial frameworks, shortcomings in biodiversity policies and challenges due to an overlap in responsibilities and regulations between key agencies, and political conflicts
- Lack of data and research with regards to wildlife monitoring, and the subsequent development of sustainability criteria and quotas
- Rapidly growing human populations

Activities undertaken to address these challenges include:

- Private investment in wildlife conservation with revenue accruing from hunting and other non-consumptive activities
- Community participation in wildlife management and strengthening of eco-tourism projects
- Providing economic incentives or livelihood alternatives to people facing poverty has been proven to reduce pressures on wildlife.
- Developing and adopting wildlife law enforcements providing standards and protocols related to the investigation, surveillance, detention, handling of evidence and prosecution of cases, complemented by wildlife Import and export bills providing a framework and mechanism to govern international trade in wildlife

## STRENGTHENING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY

In order to strengthen the knowledge base on sustainable use of biodiversity, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) decided to include a related assessment into its first work programme 2014-2018<sup>9</sup>.

The objective of the proposed assessment is to assess various approaches to sustainable use of wild species and to strengthen related capacities. It focuses on practices and measures for the use of wild species that enhance sustainability, and will encompass terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems globally.

The according scoping document<sup>10</sup> was just discussed at the fourth plenary of IPBES in February 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (IPBES-4). It contains the following chapter outlines:

- *Chapter 1* will introduce the concept of sustainable use. It will provide a critical assessment of sustainable use principles (standards on sustainable use of

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information on the activities conducted by the CPW are given in UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/INF/48.

<sup>8</sup> UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/11

<sup>9</sup> deliverable 3(b)(iii): Thematic assessment on sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and strengthening capacities and tools

<sup>10</sup> IPBES/4/10

biodiversity, precautionary principle, importance of sustainable use to local communities and livelihoods as well as national economies, among others)

- *Chapters 2, 3 and 4* will review the effectiveness of the sustainable harvesting, use and trade of wild species within each of the three consumptive categories: (2) provisioning of food and medicine, (3) provisioning of raw material, timber and non-timber forest products used for construction, energy supply and livestock forage, (4) use of wild species for ornamentation, cultural and recreational purposes
- *Chapter 5* will bring together conclusions and lessons from across the three preceding chapters, including a compilation of policy support tools and management guidelines on sustainable use.

The assessment directly relates to CBD Aichi Targets 3, 4, 6 and 7 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which aim to reduce direct pressures on biodiversity and promote its sustainable use. Furthermore, it is strongly linked to the work under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Due to its current financial shortfall, IPBES needed to postpone the decision about the start of the IAS assessment to IPBES-5 in early 2017. However, IPBES-4 already discussed and endorsed its rapid implementation.<sup>11</sup>

## ADDRESSING THE LOSS OF WILDLIFE: A CBD ROAD MAP FOR FOOD SECURITY

To feed into the discussions on sustainable use of wildlife and bushmeat hunting during SBSTTA-20, the CBD Secretariat has developed a draft road map to addressing the issues of food security and better governance regarding wildlife use. The stated road map includes the following activities:

1. *Working with the upstream actors to improve the sustainability of supply*
  - a. Hunters: hunting rules, quotas; participatory monitoring tools
  - b. Extractive industries: codes of conduct, wildlife concerns in companies' standard operating procedures, manned checkpoints, certification
2. *Reducing the demand*
  - a. Rural consumers: alternative sources of protein and economic opportunities in productive sectors; environmental education and awareness rising
  - b. Retailers, urban consumers: bans on protected/endorsed species sales and consumption; taxing sales of authorized species
  - c. International consumers: heavy fines for transport or trade of bushmeat; awareness rising of the issue in airports or seaports; train custom personnel

<sup>11</sup> <http://biodiversity.de/index.php/ipbes/ueber-ipbes/meetings/4-plenum/blog-ipbes-4/5952-zusammenfassung-ipbes-4>

3. *Create an enabling environment for a controlled, sustainable bushmeat sector*

- a. Local institutions: support of communities that have a vested interest in protecting the resource; capacity to setup and manage sustainable bushmeat markets
- b. National level: ownership, linked to tenurial and rights reform; legitimize the bushmeat debate; economic assessment of the sector; acknowledge contribution of bushmeat to food security in national strategies; develop a framework to “formalize” parts of the trade; review national legislation for coherence
- c. International level: strictly enforce CITES; ensure wildlife issues are covered within internationally-supported policy processes

4. *Develop more targeted research*

- a. More incisive investigations on the roles which bushmeat might play in poverty eradication in balance with the sustainable use of the resource
- b. Develop cost-effective systems for examining the importance of wild meat to human populations in different ecological and socioeconomic settings
- c. Determine causal links between alternative protein sources (e.g. marine and freshwater fish supply) and wildlife populations, and the ecological footprints of increasing accessibility to domestic meats (e.g. livestock, poultry)
- d. Elaborate effective systems for monitoring the status of hunted wildlife
- e. Original research on the role of source-sink dynamics of hunted wildlife, including the role of protected areas
- f. Understand the relationships and trade-offs between bushmeat and other meat/protein sources for human populations inhabiting distinct faunal areas

Source: UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/11

## IMPRESSUM

The Network-Forum for Biodiversity Research Germany (NeFo) is a project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and is mainly carried out by the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ and the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.



For more information about the NeFo-Project and the NeFo-Team visit [www.biodiversity.de](http://www.biodiversity.de).