

Peru mahogany decision highlights overlooked timber proposals at CITES

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Beyond the headline-grabbing proposals on bluefin tuna and ivory trade, the largest wildlife trade convention meeting this week will also address several timber-related issues - an often overlooked responsibility of the Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

In a CITES meeting on Friday, Peru was given a six month ultimatum to address critical issues over the illegal mahogany trade.

The CITES Standing Committee - the body that governs the CITES between conference of the parties meetings - took the decision to take this step following Peru's repeated failure to manage effectively illegal logging and trade in the valuable timber. CITES Parties will be discussing timber, medicinal plants and agarwood at the meeting on Monday, March 15th.

The timber-related trade - including agarwood, an aromatic resin extracted from certain [tree species](#) - is especially important in the Middle East, where CITES governments are meeting for the first time.

Mahogany is popular to make furniture all over the world, while agarwood is used in perfume-making in Middle Eastern countries.

"Trees account for the vast bulk of wild plants in trade, yet only three commercially important timber species are listed on CITES, of which bigleaf mahogany is the most valuable," said Colman O'Criodain,

Wildlife trade analyst, WWF International.

Six months from now, Peru must have enacted legislation to regulate the mahogany trade, implemented a computerised tracking system for mahogany and harmonised the different harvest and export quota systems being used.

Failure to meet these requirements will result in the Standing Committee voting on a suspension of mahogany exports from Peru.

"Peru argues that it exports less than a fifth of the mahogany it did a decade ago, but that's not because they've cut down on the trade through better management, it's because they've plundered their forests of the resource," said Bernardo Ortiz, Director of TRAFFIC South America.

"Years of mismanagement in Peru's mahogany trade is making an international ban an inevitable outcome. But the reality is it is too little too late given mahogany is effectively commercial extinct in Peru already."

Earlier, Peru rejected a recommendation from the Committee that it set a voluntary moratorium on its mahogany exports.

Other timber proposals that CITES governments will consider at this conference include Brazilian rosewood and holy wood (also known as palo santo), both of which are also valued for their oils by the cosmetics industry.

An estimated 175 governments are expected to participate in the 15th Conference of the Parties to CITES, which began Saturday in Doha, Qatar, and runs through March 25.

Provided by World Wildlife Fund

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