

Zimbabwe to export elephants in population curb

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Wildlife authorities in Zimbabwe on Wednesday announced plans to export at least 62 elephants to top up scant state funding and curb a ballooning pachyderm population.

"Zimbabwe got allocations from CITES (Convention on International

Trade in Endangered Species) to export elephants to suitable destinations and one of the destinations is China," Jerry Gatora, chairman of the parks and wildlife authority, told AFP.

Exports would start in the first quarter of next year after assessment of their destination, he said.

He said buyers from the United Arab Emirates want 15 elephants, China 27 and France between 15 and 20.

But a local animal rights group claimed that elephant calves dragged from their mothers were being sent squashed in containers to Maputo for export to China.

"There is nothing unusual about the exports," Gatora countered. "The major reason we are selling off the elephants is because we want to ensure sustainable use of our natural resources.

"We have 80,000 elephants against a carrying capacity of 42,000 and this is not sustainable in the long run. The exports are carefully controlled by CITES.

"All those making noise about it are people who do not want Zimbabwe to benefit from its resources."

State game parks in Zimbabwe operate with limited government funding and often rely on the charity of private companies.

Last year at least 300 elephants died in Hwange national park after poachers poisoned the environs of their watering holes with cyanide.

Park authorities said lack of funds limited patrols by game rangers leaving animals at the mercy of poachers.

Gatora said proceeds from the export of the [elephants](#) would fund running of game parks while a portion would be allocated to communities bordering game reserves.

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