



ANIMAL PROTECTION THROUGH FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Link between Animal Protection and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

Illegal wildlife trade is rampant, forests and natural habitats are disappearing, ocean stocks are plummeting, and climate change poses grave risks to humans and animals alike. These are just a few animal issues impacted by increasing globalisation. Many nations have acknowledged the link between international trade and environmental and animal protection concerns by including specific provisions in bilateral and regional FTAs.

The European Union (EU) is often regarded as a world leader in animal protection issues, and is also one of the largest players in global trade in the world. In recent years, the EU has begun regularly incorporating provisions on animal welfare, sustainable development, and environmental protection into its trade agreements. HSI applauds this increased focus on the link between animal and environmental protection and trade and believes that going forward, there are opportunities to even further strengthen existing provisions.

Need to Address Illegal Wildlife Trade

In many cases, the increase in legal trade from a new trade agreement can result in an increase in illegal trade as more (and new) products are exchanged, new trading routes are developed, and customs and border officials adjust to the increased volume of trade. This has been the case for the illegal wildlife trade, which is a thriving global issue that is in critical need of increased attention.

Illegal wildlife trade involves trade in both live animals that are used for everything from exotic pets to biomedical research, as well as wildlife products that are used as ingredients in traditional medicines or luxury items. It is estimated that the illegal wildlife trade generates over € 7,2 billion annually, third behind only the illegal drug and arms trades (e.g., <http://www.cawtglobal.org/wildlife-crime/>). It has a devastating impact on wildlife populations that are most often already endangered or threatened. Moreover, methods used to capture animals for black market trade, as well as transport conditions, may be terribly cruel. Illegal wildlife trade has also been linked to human health concerns, the spread of invasive non-native species, other illicit activities like illegal logging, as well as to violence, drugs and organised crime.

HSI Recommendations:

- Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are key mechanisms that can be used to help combat illegal wildlife trade by recognising the link between increased legal and illegal trade.
- HSI believes that it is imperative that sustainable development chapters of EU FTAs include provisions addressing illegal wildlife trade by focusing on more robust enforcement of national wildlife and environmental laws, as well as enforcement and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- To complement these provisions, HSI also recommends that the sustainable development chapters include provisions that require the EU and its trading partners to establish cooperative programmes on wildlife protection and preservation, such as through the establishment and operation of wildlife rescue centres for confiscated animals and the development of ecotourism programmes as alternatives to poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

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