

FAUNA & FLORA INTERNATIONAL'S POSITION ON COVID-19, WILDLIFE TRADE & BIODIVERSITY

To prevent further major outbreaks of novel diseases such as Covid-19, H5N1, SARS and MERS7, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) calls for a halt in all commercial trade in high risk wild taxa from, and within, high risk areas, whilst risks are assessed, targeted policy responses formulated, and the global community works to transform its relationship with nature as a critical investment in the future health of ourselves and our planet.

Specifically, **immediate action** is needed to:

- 1. Halt commercial trade¹ in wild mammals and birds (including from captive breeding facilities) for human consumption, from and within high risk areas.** This should include:
 - Resolute implementation and enforcement of existing national and international laws and regulations governing wildlife trade to end all illegal wildlife trade, and establishing a new international framework to address wildlife trafficking, for example under the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.
 - Maintaining and extending emergency restrictions on legal trade in wild mammals and birds for human consumption.

High risk areas: This must be informed by experts in epidemiology based on best available information, which points to tropical areas with high wild mammal diversity, and areas experiencing rapid urban growth, high human population density, rapid land use changes, increased movements of people and animals, increased complexity in animal-sourced product value chains, increased rural-to-urban migration, and high levels of inequality.

Exclusions: Legal harvest of wild meat species for household consumption and for limited local trade (i.e. harvest to local marketplace for local consumption) by those who currently have no alternative sources of protein, to ensure food security and well-being whilst a risk assessment is undertaken and policy recommendations made. In the absence of alternative funding mechanisms, an exclusion should apply for non-commercial activities that directly benefit or fund legally recognised private or community-owned conservation.

This should be followed by:

- 2. Review and reform of legal commercial trade in wild animals (including those from captive breeding facilities) to substantially reduce the risk of zoonotic disease emergence and transmission humans.** This should be informed by a risk assessment that recognises the diversity of legal commercial trade in wild animals and of the contexts in which it occurs; involves experts from a range of sectors (e.g. epidemiology, agriculture, veterinary science, international development) and national and local stakeholders; and outlines policy recommendations that take into account:
 - sustainability of harvest;
 - the potential for displacement of trade;
 - food security and the well-being of vulnerable, poor and marginalised groups;
 - any potential loss of incentives and funding to maintain wildlife conservation as a land use which may lead to biodiversity loss, and in turn negatively impact on human health and wellbeing.
- 3. Sustained protection and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity as a critical investment in the future health of ourselves and our planet.** This must include reducing extreme poverty and inequality to reduce pressure on biodiversity for food, medicine, income and energy security, as well as far-reaching transformation in our relationship with nature.

The costs of implementing the above are trivial when weighed against the cost of the Covid-19 pandemic, and future global pandemics.

¹ As per the CITES definition of 'primarily commercial purposes': 'to obtain economic benefit (whether in cash or otherwise), and is directed toward resale, exchange, provision of a service or any other form of economic use or benefit.'