



Environment Digest 14

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The novel corona virus outbreak has focused attention on the possible role of the trade in wild animals as a causative factor behind the epidemic. It is well known that some viruses are able to cross between species, and there is strong evidence that this virus is one of them. This has sparked calls for the trade to be more tightly controlled or to be shut down altogether.

<https://blog.humanesociety.org/2020/04/breaking-news-fauci-calls-for-closing-down-wildlife-markets-around-the-globe.html>

<https://africageographic.com/blog/covid-19-will-african-governments-now-crack-down-on-illegal-wildlife-trade/>

The Wildlife Trade

The 'wildlife trade' refers to the selling and buying of non-domesticated animal and plant products, which are usually extracted from their natural habitat or raised under controlled conditions. This includes the selling and buying of dead and living animal products such as skin, bone and meat.

<https://www.cbd.int/financial/monterreytradetech/iucn-wildtrade.pdf>

The Legal Wildlife Trade

Legal trade in wildlife is regulated by the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). It is aimed at enhancing rural livelihoods while at the same time conserving biological diversity.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/13586/towards-legal-sustainable-and-equitable-wildlife-trade>

The Illegal Wildlife Trade

Poachers, traffickers and highly organised criminal syndicates are responsible for the increasingly devastating illegal trade of the most precious wildlife species across the globe, with links to large-scale global commercial markets in China, the United States of America and the European Union.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/dec/08/wildlife-trafficking-science-technology-come-to-rescue-end-illegal-trade>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/feb/05/florida-authorities-seize-1400lbs-shark-fins-bag-full-of-drugs>

The Wildlife Trade and Covid-19

The lucrative animal trade industry in China has a suspected role in the outbreak of Covid-19. Despite the lack of sufficient scientific evidence at this stage, scientists believe the virus came from an animal host in Wuhan City's 'wet market', where animals are slaughtered and traded. Substantiating this belief is evidence from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars) epidemic of 2003; that was traced to a wide range of animal species including Civets cats, which dominate the China wildlife trade market.

<https://www.motherjones.com/food/2020/03/the-surprising-history-of-the-wildlife-trade-that-may-have-sparked-the-coronavirus/>

<https://www.ft.com/content/74f1b26e-53c0-11ea-90ad-25e377c0ee1f>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/billion-dollar-wildlife-industry-in-vietnam-under-assault-as-law-drafted-to-halt-trading>

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