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Russian Federation

Fishery Products

CITES Bans Black Caviar Exports from Russia

2006

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Report Highlights:

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) did not ratify the 2006 export quota for black caviar from Russia due to the failure of the Russian government to provide sufficient information about the critical stocks of sturgeon in the Caspian Sea and an enforcement plan to prevent poaching and over-fishing. Along with Russia, three other Caspian nations - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - have not been granted an export quota. As a consequence, Iran has become a monopoly in caviar trade and production in 2006.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Moscow [RS1]
[RS]

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) updated the world 2006 export quota for sturgeon on April 11, 2006 and left four Caspian nations – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan - without quotas. Only Iran will be allowed to export 44.3 metric tons of caviar from the Caspian Sea sturgeon this year.

The ban is in response to the rapidly declining sturgeon population, out of control poaching, and poor government enforcement measures to combat poaching and improve the ecological situation of the Caspian Sea. According to analysts, Russia will likely restrict domestic caviar and sturgeon trade and develop more transparent enforcement measures on sturgeon stocks to regain its export quota even though CITES did not remove the right of these countries to fish sturgeon for domestic consumption. In 2005 Russia was granted an export quota of 258 tons of sturgeon and caviar, Iran – 500 tons, Kazakhstan- 195 tons, Azerbaijan – 92 tons.

CITES representatives reported that these four Caspian countries failed to provide information regarding depleting sturgeon stocks in the Caspian Sea. These stocks have dwindled to dangerously low levels due to over-fishing and poaching. In 2005, the total volume of exported caviar and caviar products from these five Caspian nations was estimated at 105 metric tons. However, according to CITES, that same amount of caviar is also illegally exported, mostly from Russia, with an estimated annual loss of \$800 million in tax revenues to the Russian government.

The Russian share of the world caviar market is estimated at 23-30 percent, including illegal caviar trade. The total volume of gray market black caviar production in Russia is estimated at nearly 600 metric tons, 10 to 12 times more than actually reported in official statistics.

The CITES ban on black caviar exports from Russia has the support of Gennadiy Gorbunov, Chairman of the Committee of Agrarian Policy. He believes that the ban should be extended for several years to give Russia's sturgeon population a chance to recover.

According to the International Confederation of Consumer Societies in Russia, the situation of Russia's sturgeon population (harvesting, processing and distribution) is critical. The government's efforts aimed at improving the situation in Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have failed.

For more information about sturgeon stocks and trade please refer to GAIN RS5038 on the FAS Attaché Reports database (<http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/AttacheRep/default.asp>)