



NOTICE TO THE WILDLIFE IMPORT/EXPORT COMMUNITY



January 26, 2006

Subject: 2005 and 2006 Harvested Sturgeon Caviar and Sturgeon Products

Background: At the 13 th Conference of the Parties in October 2004, the CITES countries agreed that from 2006 onward, countries should not import caviar harvested or processed in a preceding year. Sturgeon caviar harvested from shared stocks in 2005 was required to be exported from sturgeon countries by December 31, 2005. The countries also agreed that no re-export of caviar should be authorized more than 18 months from the date of issuance of the relevant original export permit. Sturgeon caviar harvested from shared stocks in 2005 that was legally exported during 2005 may be re-exported in 2006 and 2007 as long as the re-export takes place within 18 months from the date of issuance of the original export permit.

On January 3, 2006, the CITES Secretariat issued a press advisory announcing that they were unable to publish the 2006 export quotas for caviar and sturgeon products (except for aquaculture) until exporting countries provide more information about the sustainability of their sturgeon catch. Countries sharing sturgeon stocks must agree among themselves on catch and export quotas based upon scientific surveys of the stocks. The Secretariat is concerned that the proposed quotas may not fully reflect the reductions in stocks or make sufficient allowances for illegal fishing and hopes that the countries involved will provide the information necessary for the Secretariat to publish the 2006 quotas.

This was not an official Notification to the Parties with a recommendation to suspend trade, but rather a press release urging exporting countries to provide the missing information. It was, however, an alert to importing countries that if this data deficiency is not resolved, there may be no sturgeon quotas for 2006 and therefore, no legal international trade in sturgeon caviar and sturgeon products harvested in 2006 from shared stocks.

Action:

- The United States no longer allow the import of sturgeon caviar harvested in 2005 and exported directly from countries bordering the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea/lower Danube, and the Heilongjiang/Amur River.
- The United States will continue to allow the import of 2005 harvested caviar that was legally exported during 2005 and re-exported to the United States as long as the re-export to the United States takes place within 18 months from the date of issuance of the original export permit.
- The United States will also continue to allow the re-export of 2005 harvested caviar from the United States as long as that re-export takes place within 18 months from the date of issuance of the original export permit.
- Although the 2006 harvest has not yet begun, the trade community should be aware that the United States could refuse import of caviar and sturgeon products harvested by any countries bordering the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea/lower Danube, and the Heilongjiang/Amur River that do not have approved 2006 quotas.

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