International Trade Centre

TRADE IN PYTHON SKINS: IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS IN VIET NAM

In collaboration with

IUCN SSC Species Survival Commission

Boa & Python SPECIALIST GROUP

KERING

TRADE IN PYTHON SKINS: IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS IN VIET NAM

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International Trade Centre (ITC)
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This paper examines the impact of the international python skin trade on the livelihoods of people in Viet Nam. It explores the demographic of python trade participants and identifies the factors necessary for improving the livelihood resilience and capacity of people engaged in python trade. The report is relevant for importers and exporters, regulators, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, community representatives and researchers seeking to improve sustainability of the python skin trade and the associated benefits derived by local people in Viet Nam.

Descriptors: **Hides and Skins, Leather, Endangered Species, Biodiversity, Sustainable Development, Economic Development, Viet Nam.**

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English

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Foreword ITC

The majority of the world's poorest live in rural areas and in developing countries, largely dependent on natural resources for food, shelter, medicine and income. For this reason, the protection of the forests and oceans are two of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by United Nations members in 2015.

Trade has been recognized as a 'means for implementation' of the Global Goals, and particular attention should be given to trade in natural resources given the contribution this can make to addressing Global Goal 1: the reduction of poverty. In 2012, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) signed a Letter of Agreement where ITC committed to provide knowledge and capacity-building for Parties to CITES in order to strengthen the sustainability and livelihood benefits of their trade in wildlife.

These studies – 'Trade in Python Skins: Impact on Livelihoods in Viet Nam' and the accompanying publication 'Trade in Python Skins: Impact on Livelihoods in Peninsular Malaysia' – are ITC's direct contribution to this agreement.

Following the publication of an ITC report in 2012 identifying sustainability, legality and animal-welfare issues in the python supply chain, ITC, together with the World Conservation Union's Boa and Python Specialist Species Group and Kering, a Group of Luxury and Sport & Lifestyle brands, established a public-private partnership called the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP).

This PCP is a unique example of a United Nations organization, the private sector and scientists working together to tackle sustainability issues in trade. It has pooled financial resources as well as expertise on markets, the fashion business and conservation biology. This has resulted in the provision of scientifically sound evidence for policymakers, in particular CITES Parties, to regulate trade more effectively. It has brought a business reality to the discussion and created greater awareness in the industry around options for enhancing the sustainability of trade in the species. Finally, it has identified capacity-building needs for traders, authorities and the communities managing wildlife.

As part of its contribution to PCP, ITC has carried out an analysis of the livelihood benefits of the trade in python skins in Viet Nam. Despite the high visibility of the trade on the catwalks of Milan and London, there is very little awareness about who derives an income from the trade and how value can be increased for rural livelihoods. By carrying out this research, ITC and PCP present evidence that the captive breeding of python skins is creating hundreds of jobs in Viet Nam. These incomes contribute to social stability and can lead to more inclusive societies with less poverty.

I would like to thank the Boa and Python Specialist Group of the IUCN Specialist Survival Commission, the CITES Authorities in Viet Nam, the CITES Secretariat, Kering and its brand Gucci for their collaboration and support in producing the research.

I remain confident that the findings will contribute concretely to discussions at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of CITES in September 2016 and beyond, as well as direct a greater level of interest and resources towards improved sustainable management and livelihood benefits from the trade in flora and fauna.

Arancha González
Executive Director
International Trade Centre

Foreword CITES

Python breeding in Viet Nam has started since the 1980s and rapidly expanded over the last two decades due to (i) increased demand and (ii) domestic restrictions on wild harvest. The closed-cycle captive breeding system for pythons in Viet Nam is typical that a small number of large farms produce many hatchlings that are given or sold to a large number of small “satellite farms” for raising; after approximately one year, satellite farms then sell adult pythons back to the large farms for slaughter and/or export. These satellite farms are mostly at household scale.

For strengthening python breeding management and improving the sustainability, transparency, animal welfare and local livelihoods for the python skin trade, Viet Nam CITES Management Authority has supported the Python Conservation Partnership in conducting research works on python farming, skin trade and their impact on local livelihoods in Viet Nam.

In the above context, this research aims to provide insight into: (i) the role of the trade in supporting local livelihoods in Viet Nam; (ii) social and trade-related challenges facing Vietnamese python farmers; and (iii) opportunities to improve local trade benefits.

This research work has revealed that the livelihood impacts of farming pythons are overwhelmingly positive in Viet Nam. In particular, the satellite farming model has proven particularly effective in engaging large numbers of poor rural households and offering reliable income and improved wellbeing. However, the household scaled python farmers are facing challenges such as limited capacity to invest in pythons and cages, and to develop the skills required for breeding and/or processing pythons; to manage the environment for the pythons including reducing potential disease, improving hygiene and managing ambient temperatures; and to have a sound understanding of the international markets to which they supply.

Overall, the findings and recommendations from this research work actively contribute to the improvement of management of python breeding, sustainability of the python skin trade and the associated benefits derived by local people in Viet Nam.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the authors as well as the Python Conservation Partnership (Kering, International Trade Center and IUCN Boa & Python Specialist Group) for their close cooperation and hard work in conducting this research project.

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The study was produced by the Trade and Environment Programme at ITC within the context of the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP), a public-private partnership among ITC, IUCN and Kering established in 2013 with the objective to improve sustainability of the python skin trade.

ITC would like to express its appreciation to the python farm households in Viet Nam that agreed to be interviewed for this study. ITC also expresses gratitude to the CITES Management Authority of Viet Nam for supporting and facilitating the research and field visits. ITC is grateful for comments and feedback received from Victoria Lichtschein and Jessica Lyons (both of IUCN BPSG), Rosie Cooney of IUCN's Sustainable Use and Livelihoods (SULi) Specialist Group, Helen Crowley (Kering), Anders Aeroe and Robert Skidmore (ITC) and members of the PCP.

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About the Python Conservation Partnership

Collaboration between Kering, ITC and the Boa and Python Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN SSC Boa & Python Specialist Group), the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP) was established in November 2013 with the aim of contributing to the improved sustainability of the python skin trade and to help facilitate industry-wide change. The PCP's research programme focuses on study and recommendations to improve sustainability, transparency, animal welfare and local livelihoods for the python skin trade.

About the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC supports businesses in developing countries to become more competitive in global markets, speeding economic development and contributing to the achievement of The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ITC works with policymakers, trade and investment support institutions, exporters and other stakeholders in the public and private sectors to enable export success of small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries and transition economies.

About the Boa and Python Specialist Group

The Boa and Python Specialist Group (BPSG) is a global network of volunteer experts, part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). The BPSG is the leading world authority on boas and pythons. Its mission is to provide expert opinion and scientific advice to IUCN and other conservation organizations, government and non-government agencies, applicable to the conservation of boas and pythons.

About Kering

A world leader in apparel and accessories, Kering develops an ensemble of powerful Luxury and Sport & Lifestyle brands: Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Saint Laurent, Alexander McQueen, Balenciaga, Brioni, Christopher Kane, McQ, Stella McCartney, Tomas Maier, Boucheron, Dodo, Girard-Perregaux,

JeanRichard, Pomellato, Qeelin, Ulysse Nardin, Puma, Volcom and Cobra. By ‘empowering imagination’ in the fullest sense, Kering encourages its brands to reach their potential in the most sustainable manner. Present in more than 120 countries, the Group generated revenue of more than €11.5 billion in 2015 and had more than 38,000 employees at year end. The Kering (previously PPR) share is listed on Euronext Paris (FR 0000121485, KER.PA, KER.FP).

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