

Overview of important international seizures in the European Union

January to December 2013

Compiled by TRAFFIC
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1. INTRODUCTION

This briefing aims to provide an overview of the most important CITES-related seizures reported by Member States of the European Union¹ (EU) for the twelve-month period January to December 2013 inclusive so that these can be shared with key trade partners of the EU and selected third countries, as deemed necessary by EU Member States. Therefore, the focus of this briefing is on seizures having taken place at EU borders (airports, maritime ports, land boundaries and also postal centres). Intra-EU trade and trade internal to Member States are excluded.

The quantitative analysis of seizures (in **Section 2**) is based on reports of significant seizures submitted by EU Member States to the European Commission (EC) for 2013. Although a total of 22 Member States reported seizures for this year, Section 2 is based on reports provided by 15 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia², Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom)³. Some of the 15 reporting EU Member States provided information for only a part of the reporting period.

It is noted that EU Member States determine (and report) the seizures they consider to be significant according to their own criteria. To allow a quantitative analysis of data in Section 2, seizures that involved several species were separated and treated as distinct records. Therefore, this briefing refers to “seizure records” as opposed to seizures. This also means that the actual number of seizures was lower than the number of seizure records in Section 2.

In addition to the significant seizures reported by EU Member States, this briefing also includes information from seizure news items shared by EU Member States via restricted channels for information exchange in the EU as well as from open sources (see **Section 3**).

2. OVERVIEW OF REPORTED INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES INVOLVING THE EU

A total of 1468 seizure records were reported by 15 EU Member States in 2013. Of these, 869 seizure records could be classified as “international”, i.e. relating to shipments involving external or third countries and so took place at EU external borders. Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK together reported 72% of the international seizure records in 2013.

The main types of commodity seized at EU borders in 2013 were, in order of number of reported seizure records (see **Figure 1**):

- (i) **medicinals**⁴, including both medicinal products and parts/derivatives for medicinal use⁵ (over 800 000 items (e.g. pills, packets, etc.) and an additional 4876 kg). This included 772 521 plant-derived medicinal items (and 1653 kg) and 32 973 animal-derived medicinal items (and 3223 kg).

¹ The Member States of the EU in 2013: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

² Croatia joined the EU on 1 July 2013.

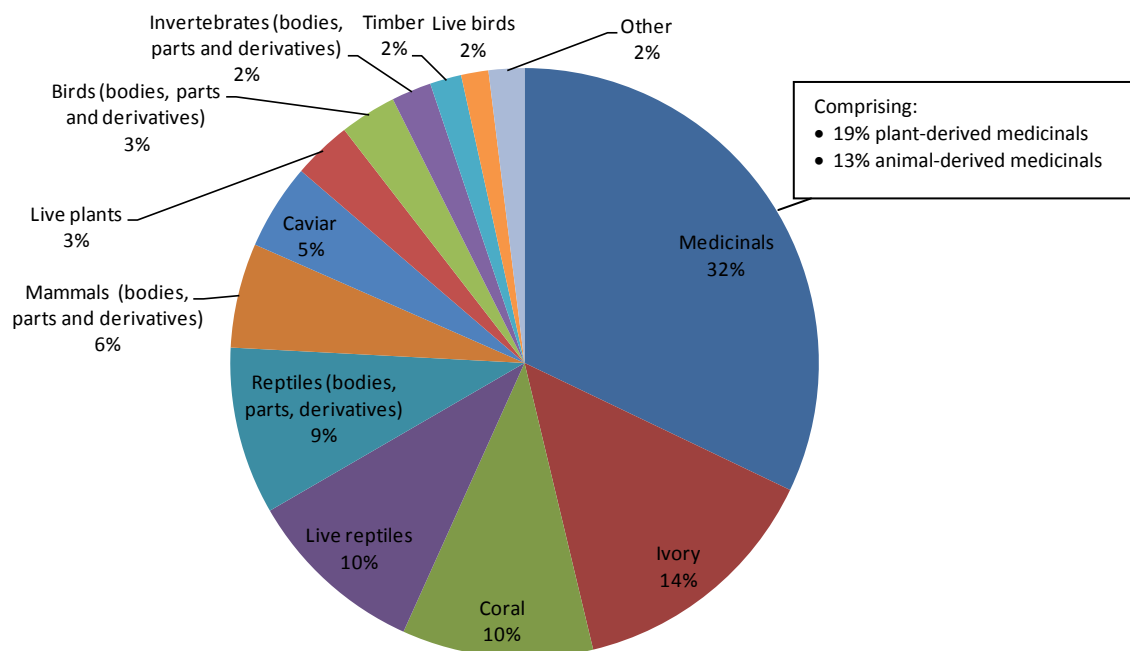
³ A number of Member States (e.g. Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden) reported that no seizures or no significant seizures took place during the period they reported on.

⁴ Units used to report medicinals are not consistent across EU Member States: some reported units as packs of tablets others as individual tablets; sometimes no unit was specified.

⁵ Including animal parts/derivatives, e.g. rhino horn, Tiger bone and pangolin scales.

- (ii) **ivory** (1545 specimens and approximately 50 kg),
- (iii) **corals** (723 specimens and approximately 700 kg);
- (iv) **live reptiles** (1570 specimens);
- (v) **reptile bodies, parts and derivatives** (5198 specimens);
- (vi) **mammal bodies, parts and derivatives** (182 specimens and 3.5 kg); and
- (vii) **caviar** (approx. 1800 items and 470 kg of caviar/products containing caviar extract).

Figure 1: Distribution of 869 international seizure records reported by EU Member States across commodity groups, 2013



Source: seizure reports by 15 EU Member States

Important individual seizures reported by Member States across key commodity groups are set out in **Section 3**.

Figure 2 depicts the main countries/territories of export or of departure of illegal trade as reported by the 15 EU Member States.

- **China** was the reported exporter for 93 seizure records: as in 2012, most of these involved medicinals⁶ (77 seizure records involving 2577 kg and an additional 329 806 items containing species such as **Hoodia** *Hoodia* spp. (App. II/Annex B), **Costus Root** *Saussurea costus* (App. I/Annex A), **orchids** Orchidaceae spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B), **Leopard** *Panthera pardus* (App. I/Annex A), **Tiger** *Panthera tigris* (App. I/Annex A), **Musk Deer** *Moschus* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) and **Saiga Antelope** (App. II/Annex B)).
- The **USA** was the reported exporter for 79 seizure records: nearly half of these exports (37) involved medicinals (205 kg and an additional 360 860 items containing **African Cherry** *Prunus africana* (App. II/Annex B), **Hoodia**, **Cape Aloe** *Aloe ferox* (App. II/Annex B) and **orchids**).
- **Switzerland** was the reported exporter for 52 seizure records: as in 2012, over half of these exports (39) were seizures reported by Germany and concerned medicinals containing **Costus Root**.

⁶ When it is stated that a medicine contains a CITES-listed species, this refers to the packaging which lists the species as one of the ingredients.

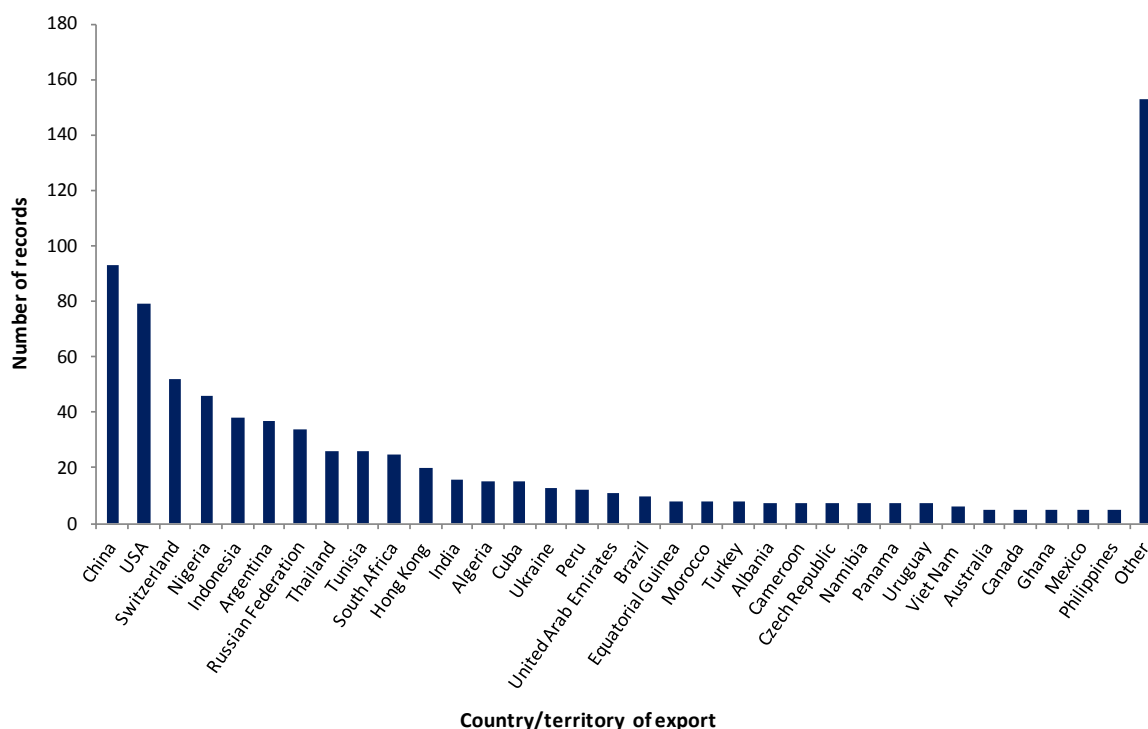
- **Nigeria** was the reported exporter for 46 seizure records: the majority of these records (39) concerned items seized as a result of controls carried out on postal parcels in transit in Germany *en route* to Hong Kong, mainland China and, to a lesser extent, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR). The majority of items seized were **pangolin** *Manis* spp. (App. II/Annex B) **scales** and worked items (jewellery, carvings, etc.) made from **African Elephant** (App. I/II, Annex A/B) **ivory**.

The data in **Figure 2** also include seizures made upon export from EU Member States.

Figure 3 shows that **Hong Kong** and mainland **China** were the leading destinations for commodities seized upon (re-)export from the EU/while in transit in the EU, in terms of number of seizure records in 2013. The majority of these records involved **elephant ivory**, in particular seized by the German authorities while in transit from **Africa** (Burundi, Congo, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia and Nigeria) and **South America** (Argentina and Uruguay). It is noted that, in 2013, Belgium also made a number of seizures of elephant ivory, particularly from transiting passengers *en route* between Africa and China: while these were not reported specifically by Belgium as significant in themselves (and therefore are not reflected in the total number of seizure records in **Figure 3**), when taken together they represent a significant trend.

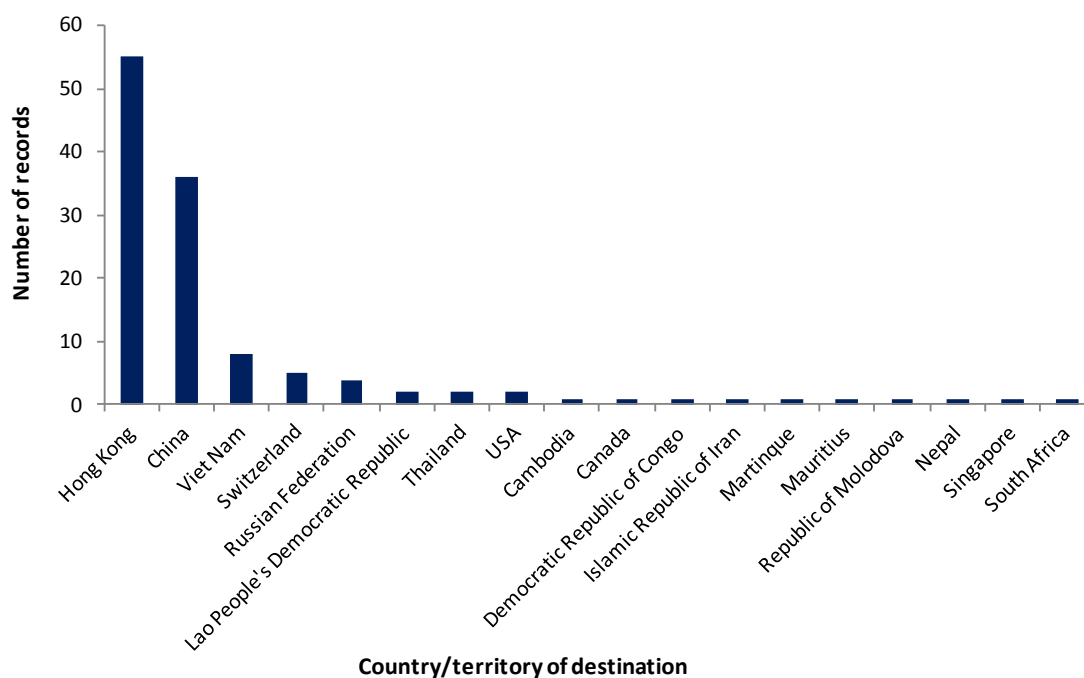
As in 2012, Hong Kong and mainland China were also important destinations for: (i) **pangolin scales** seized while in transit in Belgium and Germany *en route* from West and Central Africa (**Cameroon**, **Equatorial Guinea** and **Nigeria**); and (ii) **dried seahorses** *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B), seized while in transit in Germany (*en route* from **Peru**) and Belgium (*en route* from **Guinea**).

Figure 2: Main countries/territories of departure of illegal trade as reported by 15 EU Member States (international seizures), according to number of seizure records, 2013



Source: seizure reports by 15 EU Member States

Figure 3: Main countries/territories of destination of illegal trade from the EU (to non-EU countries only) as reported by 15 Member States, according to number of seizure records, 2013


























Source: seizure reports by 15 EU Member States

3. DETAILS OF KEY INDIVIDUAL INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER STATES IN 2013

Table 1 contains details of key individual seizures reported by EU Member States for the period January to December 2013. Again the focus is on international as opposed to intra-EU trade. Seizures were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (i) seizures involving particularly large quantities of a commodity type; and (ii) seizures highlighting important illegal trade trends involving the EU (e.g. in terms of countries or species involved).

Table 1: Details of selected seizures reported by EU Member States for 2013 arranged by commodity type (reporting country in bold)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
MEDICINALS				
Switzerland		Germany	1080 tablets containing Costus Root <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A) (one of several such seizures that took place in Germany in 2013)	Targeted at a postal centre based on intelligence (Jul 2013)
China		Netherlands	200 kg Hoodia <i>Hoodia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) powder. Another large seizure involving various (plant and animal-derived) medicinal items from China was made at a Dutch port in August 2013.	Seized at an airport (Feb 2013)
China		UK	24 090 packets of tablets containing Hoodia <i>Hoodia gordonii</i> (App. II/Annex B). Several similar seizures also made of products exported from Hong Kong and Singapore.	Targeted at a postal centre based on a risk assessment (Aug 2013)
China		UK	250 000 packets of extract containing African Cherry <i>Prunus africana</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B).	Targeted at a maritime port (Apr 2013)















TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
South Africa		UK	1000 kg Cape Aloe <i>Aloe ferox</i> (App. II/Annex B) powder	Targeted at a maritime port based on a risk assessment (Apr 2013)
USA		UK	15 120 pots (5000 kg) of herbal supplement containing orchids <i>Dendrobium</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B).	Targeted at an airport based on intelligence (Jul 2013)
Nepal		Belgium	33.2 kg of Jatamansi oil <i>Nardostachys grandiflora</i> (App. II/Annex B) of wild origin. Ban on imports from Nepal since 2011. A number of similar exports identified.	Seized at an airport (Feb 2013)
USA	 Netherlands	 Thailand	1675 kg of Candelilla wax <i>Euphorbia antisiphilitica</i> (App. II/Annex B). Intended to be shipped to Thailand for processing into lip balm. ⁷	Seized from company premises following an investigation (Jan 2013)
Cameroon	 Belgium	 Hong Kong	123 kg of pangolin scales <i>Manis</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). Six similar shipments (total of 700 kg scales) already seized from the same offender. ⁸	Seized at an airport (Jan 2013)
Nigeria	 Germany	 Hong Kong	A total of 480 kg of pangolin scales <i>Manis</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) across several seizures carried out in 2013. Controlled deliveries arranged in Hong Kong and offenders prosecuted.	Postal parcels targeted at airports based on intelligence (May - Jul 2013)
Guinea	 Belgium	 China	400 dead seahorses <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). Several hundred specimens also seized in December 2013 in a similar case. Similar seizures reported by France.	Targeting of transiting passenger luggage based on a risk assessment (Jan 2013)
Peru	 Germany	 Hong Kong	A total of 16 000 dead seahorses <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Seized from postal parcels at airports (May 2013)
South Africa		Czech Republic	Seizure of a total of 24 White Rhinoceros <i>Ceratotherium simum</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) horns during 2012 and 2013. ⁹ A further two horns were seized in the Czech Republic <i>en route</i> between South Africa and Viet Nam in December 2013.	Seized following an investigation (2012 and 2013)
Not reported	 Germany	 China, Thailand	A total of 4 White Rhinoceros <i>Ceratotherium simum</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) horns seized.	Seized from the baggage of transiting passengers (Mar and Apr 2013)
Not reported	 Czech Republic	 Viet Nam	Two complete Tiger <i>Panthera tigris</i> (App. I/Annex A) skeletons. ¹⁰ (Another complete tiger skeleton was seized from the car of a Vietnamese national in January 2013.)	Seized from cargo shipment at an airport (Jun 2013)
Ukraine		Poland	290 and 6960 live Medicinal Leeches <i>Hirudo medicinalis</i> (App. II/Annex B).	Seized from vehicles at a land boundary (Sep and Oct 2013)

⁷ Source: Netherlands CITES News, 02/2013

⁸ Source: Belgian Customs Airport News, 02/2013.

















⁹ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/07/23/us-czech-rhinos-idUKBRE96M0JX20130723>

¹⁰ Source: CITES news - Prague, 104/2013.

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details	
Export	Transit	Destination			
China		UK	Two seizures involving 1872 kg and 600 kg tortoise jelly drink containing CITES-listed tortoise <i>Testudinidae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) among the ingredients.	Targeted at a maritime port based on a risk assessment (Feb and Nov 2013)	
IVORY					
Nigeria		Germany 	China, Hong Kong, Lao PDR	Seizure of a total of 63 kg (approx.) African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) ivory. Controlled deliveries carried out for certain parcels destined for Hong Kong. Similar seizures also made in France and the UK. Ivory also seized from courier parcels sent from Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Namibia in 2013. Continuation of trend from 2012.	Targeting of postal parcels based on intelligence (2013)
Democratic Republic of Congo		Belgium 	Romania	17 kg African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) ivory seized from luggage of Chinese national. ¹¹	Seized from passenger luggage at an airport (Apr 2013)
Burundi		Belgium 	France, Italy	Several seizures of African Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) ivory. Continuation of trend seen since 2004: seizures of ivory from postal parcels coming from Burundi and destined for various countries (including Mexico, Portugal, China, Thailand, France, Italy and Belgium). ¹²	Seized from registered postal shipments (Jun 2013)
Liberia		Belgium 	China	Several seizures of African Elephant (App. I/II, Annex A/B) ivory from transiting passengers (Chinese nationals)	Seized from passenger luggage at airport (Aug and Sep 2013)
CORALS					
Indonesia		UK	120 kg and 507 kg of stony coral <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). Seizures also carried out in Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. Continuing trend from 2012.	Targeting of air freight based on a risk assessment (May and Dec 2013)	
LIVE REPTILES					
Tunisia		Italy	10 live Spur-thighed Tortoises <i>Testudo graeca</i> (App. II/Annex A) of wild origin. At least 57 live tortoises of this species were seized at Italian ports from passenger vehicles / luggage in 2013, a continuing trend from 2012. Specimens were also exported from Algeria and Morocco. Similar seizures were made in France and Spain.	Seizure at a maritime port following an investigation (Jun 2013)	
Bosnia and Herzegovina		Croatia 	Italy	A total of 27 live Hermann's Tortoises <i>Testudo hermanni</i> (App. II/Annex A) seized from the vehicles of Italian nationals.	Seizure at border posts during random controls (Apr – Jul 2013)
Togo		Belgium	Seizure of 130 live Hinged Tortoises <i>Kinixys</i> spp., 21 Graceful Chameleons <i>Chamaeleo gracilis</i> and 20 Savannah Monitor Lizards <i>Varanus exanthematicus</i> (all App. II/Annex B) of ranched origin. Failure to comply with IATA regulation and CITES import permit conditions (regarding length of specimens).	Seized during Customs documentary check at an airport (Aug 2013)	

¹¹ Source: Belgian Customs Airport News, 12/2013

¹² Source: Belgian Customs Airport News, 15/2013

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
REPTILE BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Indonesia		Netherlands	379 reptile leather products seized including items made from skins of python <i>Python</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) and monitor lizard <i>Varanus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) ¹³	Seized at an airport (Mar 2013)
Argentina		Spain	2900 Argentine teju <i>Tupinambis</i> spp. skins (App. II, Annex B). Similar seizures made in previous years.	Seized at an airport (Mar 2013)
Chad	 Hong Kong, Spain	 Poland	300 small leather products made from Nile Monitor Lizard <i>Varanus niloticus</i> skin (App. II/Annex B)	Seized during Customs documentary check at maritime port (Oct 2013)
Indonesia		UK	60 python <i>Python</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) skins	Targeting of postal parcel at an airport based on a risk assessment (Nov 2013)
MAMMAL BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Russian Federation	 Latvia	 Not known	22 skins of Eurasian Lynx <i>Lynx lynx</i> (App. I/Annex A)	Seized following a random control of a vehicle at a land boundary (Jun 2013)
CAVIAR				
Hong Kong, China		UK	1653 skin cream products containing Stellate Sturgeon <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> (App. II/Annex B) caviar extract and 203 kg of products containing sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) caviar extract	Targeting of air freight and container goods at maritime port based on intelligence/risk assessment (Apr and Jun 2013)
Israel	 Belarus	 Latvia	3419 skin cream products containing Siberian Sturgeon <i>Acipenser baerii</i> (App. II, Annex B) caviar extract	Seized at a land boundary (Aug 2013)
Ukraine		UK	4.5 kg of sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) caviar.	Targeting of passenger luggage at an airport based on a risk assessment (Oct 2013)
LIVE PLANTS				
Panama		Belgium	200 live orchids <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) of wild origin. One of several similar seizures made in Belgium and the UK in 2013.	Seized following random control of postal parcel (May 2013)
Taiwan		Bulgaria	580 live orchids <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B). The Netherlands also seized live orchids exported from Taiwan in 2013.	Seized at an airport during a Customs documentary check (June 2013)
BIRD BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Argentina	 Italy	 Malta	81 hunting trophies of various bird species (primarily App. II/Annex B birds of prey) seized from the luggage of Italian nationals	Seized at an airport (Jun 2013)
TIMBER				
Cameroon		Belgium	143 m ³ Afromosia <i>Pericopsis elata</i> (App. III/Annex B) of wild origin. An additional 700 m ³ was seized following an investigation.	Seized at a maritime port (Feb 2013)

¹³ Source: Netherlands CITES News, 05/2013

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
India	→ UK →	Hong Kong	Seizure of a total of nearly 2 tonnes of Red Sandalwood <i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> (App. II/Annex B) logs of wild origin. Other similar seizures also made in the UK in 2013	Seized at an airport following random controls/ investigation (Jul 2013)
LIVE AMPHIBIANS				
Nicaragua	→	Netherlands	600 live Red-eyed Leaf Frogs <i>Agalychnis callidryas</i> (App. II/Annex B) declared as captive-bred. Seized due to concerns over the origin of the specimens (suspected as having been taken from the wild).	Seized from air freight (Sep 2013)

Abbreviations: UK – United Kingdom, USA – United States, App. – CITES Appendix, Annex – Annex of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations, IATA – International Air Transport Association

4. BRIEF COMPARISON TO 2012

A comprehensive and quantitative comparison of seizures reported in 2012 and 2013 is not possible due to, among other things, the difference in the number of EU Member States reporting seizures in these two years (in 2012 a total of 17 EU Member States reported 967 seizure records, whereas in 2013, 15 EU Member States reported 1468 seizure records). However, some observations can be made when comparing these two years.

The commodity groups involved in the seizures, and their order of importance (in terms of number of reported seizure records), were broadly similar in 2012 and 2013, with the commodity groups “medicinals” and “ivory” ranking first and second, respectively, in both years. 2013 did, however, see an increase in the number of seizure records involving certain taxonomic groups and, in particular, **pangolin**. The number of reported seizure records involving pangolin (primarily scales, but also pills containing pangolin parts) increased from 3 in 2012 to 34 in 2013 (see **Sections 2 and 3** above for discussions of trends). There were also a number of additional seizures involving pangolin in 2013 that were not specifically reported by EU Member States¹⁴ but are detailed in open sources, for example, three seizures involving a total of 100 kg pangolin scales made by French authorities at Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport in April 2013, while in transit between **Cameroon** and **Viet Nam**.¹⁵

When comparing the main countries/territories of export or of departure reported for 2012 and 2013 (based on number of seizure records) the following can be noted:

- (i) In 2013, the **United Arab Emirates** appeared less important as a country of export of illegal trade entering the EU, due to a decline in the number of seizures of Agarwood *Aquilaria* spp. (App. II/Annex B) compared to 2012. This is likely to be attributed to the amendments relating to Agarwood agreed at CITES CoP16 in March 2013.¹⁶
- (ii) The **USA** featured more prominently as a country of export in 2013, primarily due to an increase in the number of seizure records involving **medicinal** items (particularly health supplements) reported as coming from the USA in 2013.

When looking at the countries of destination of illegal trade detected in the EU, **China** ranked first in both 2012 and 2013.

¹⁴Therefore are not detailed in **Section 3**.

¹⁵ Source: <http://tuoitrenews.vn/international/9183/french-customs-seize-pangolin-scales-headed-for-vietnam>

¹⁶ The two main changes agreed at CoP16 were: (i) amendment to CITES *Resolution Conf. 13.7 (Rev. CoP16) on the control of trade in personal and household effects* which extended the personal and household effects exemption to certain Agarwood products (up to 1 kg of woodchips, 24 ml of oil and two sets of beads or prayer beads [or two necklaces or bracelets] per person); and (ii) amendment of the annotation to the *Aquilaria* spp. listing to exempt certain products from CITES controls (exhausted Agarwood powder, including compressed powder in all shapes and finished products packaged and ready for retail trade, with the exception of beads, prayer beads and carvings).