

# Overview of important international seizures of CITES-listed specimens in the European Union

January to December 2012

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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 Union<sup>1</sup> (EU) for the twelve-month period January to December 2012 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 generally 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 2012. Although a total of 23 Member States reported seizures for this year, Section 2 is based on reports provided by 17 EU Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom)<sup>2</sup>. Some of the 17 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 967 seizure records were reported by 17 EU Member States in 2012. Of these, 799 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 and the UK together reported 75% of the international seizure records in 2012.

In terms of numbers of seizure records, the main types of commodity seized at EU borders in 2012 were (see **Figure 1**):

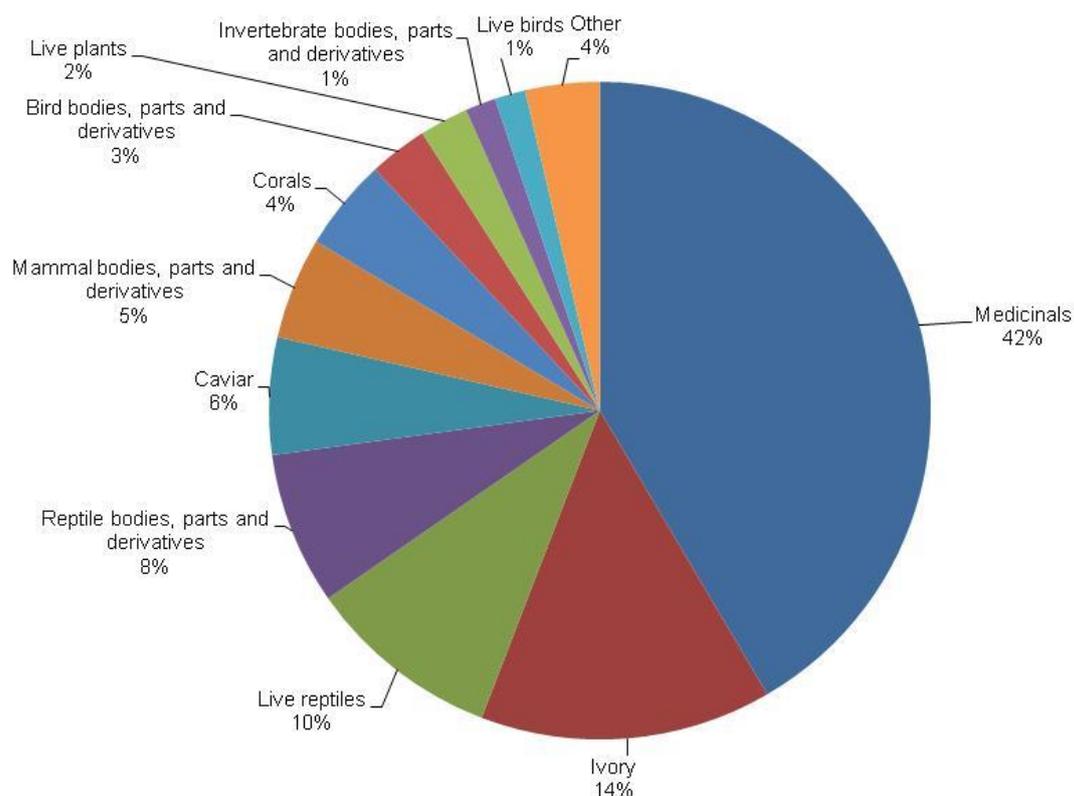
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<sup>1</sup> The Member States of the EU in 2012: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> This is due to various reasons, for example, some countries (e.g. Austria) are not included in the quantitative analysis as seizures were not specifically reported in quantitative form; some countries (e.g. Cyprus, Denmark, Greece and Sweden) reported that no seizures or no significant seizures took place during the period they reported on; other countries (e.g. Romania) only reported on internal seizures.

- (i) **medicinals**<sup>3</sup>, including both medicinal products and parts/derivatives for medicinal use, and rhino horn (over 3 million items (e.g. pills, packets, etc.) and over 3500 kg),
- (ii) **ivory** (1523 specimens and approximately 70 kg),
- (iii) **live reptiles** (812 specimens),
- (iv) **reptile bodies, parts and derivatives** (1629 specimens),
- (v) **caviar** (51 kg),
- (vi) **mammal bodies, parts and derivatives** (316 specimens), and
- (vii) **corals** (1387 specimens and approximately 2850 kg).

**Figure 1: Distribution of 799 international seizure records reported by EU Member States across commodity groups, 2012**



Source: seizure reports by 17 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 17 EU Member States.

- The **United Arab Emirates** was the reported exporter for 133 seizure records: all except five of these exports were seizures reported by the UK and concerned exports of **Agarwood *Aquilaria* spp.** (App. II/Annex B) seized as a result of targeted enforcement activities.
- **Switzerland** was the reported exporter for 61 seizure records: over half of these exports (39) were seizures reported by Germany and concerned medicinals<sup>4</sup> containing/derived from **Costus Root *Saussurea costus*** (App. I/Annex A).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

- **China** was the reported exporter for 45 seizure records: most of these involved medicinals (37 seizure records involving 572 393 items containing **Costus Root**, **Hoodia** *Hoodia* spp. (App. II/Annex B) and parts of species such as seahorses *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B), Leopard *Panthera pardus* and Tiger *Panthera tigris*, both listed on App.I/Annex A).
- **Hong Kong**<sup>5</sup> was the reported exporter for 31 seizure records: the majority of these were exports of medicinals, primarily products containing **Hoodia** (a total of 228 350 items seized).

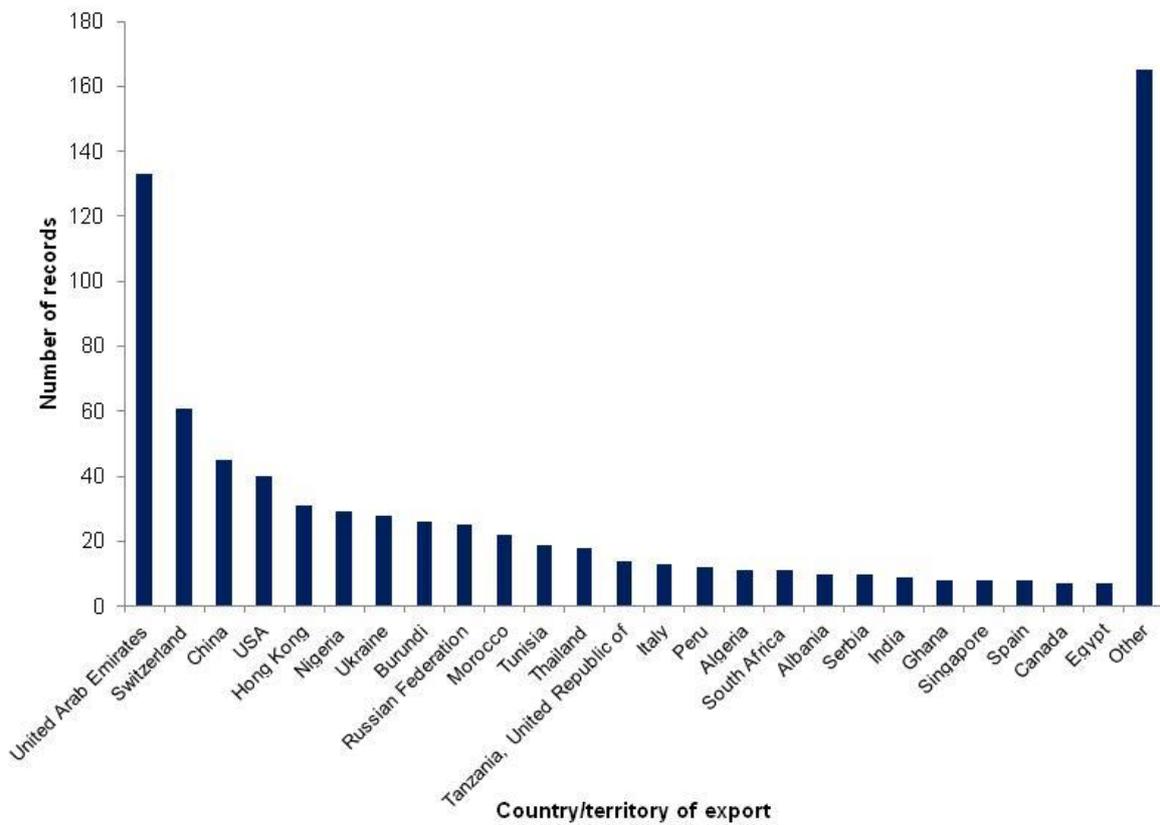
The data in **Figure 2** also include seizures made upon export from EU Member States (e.g. Italy and Spain).

**Figure 3** shows that **China** was the leading destination for commodities seized upon (re-)export from the EU/while in transit in the EU, in terms of number of seizure records in 2012. The majority of these records involved **elephant ivory**, in particular seized by the German authorities (and, to a lesser extent, the UK authorities) while in transit between **Africa** (Burundi, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda) and **China**. It is noted that, in 2012, Belgium also made a number of seizures of elephant ivory, particularly from transiting passengers *en route* between Africa (e.g. Cameroon, Gambia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone) 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. China was also an important destination for **dried seahorses** *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B), seized while in transit in the Netherlands (*en route* from **Central and South America** - Ecuador, Panama, Peru) and Belgium (*en route* from **Guinea** and **Senegal**).

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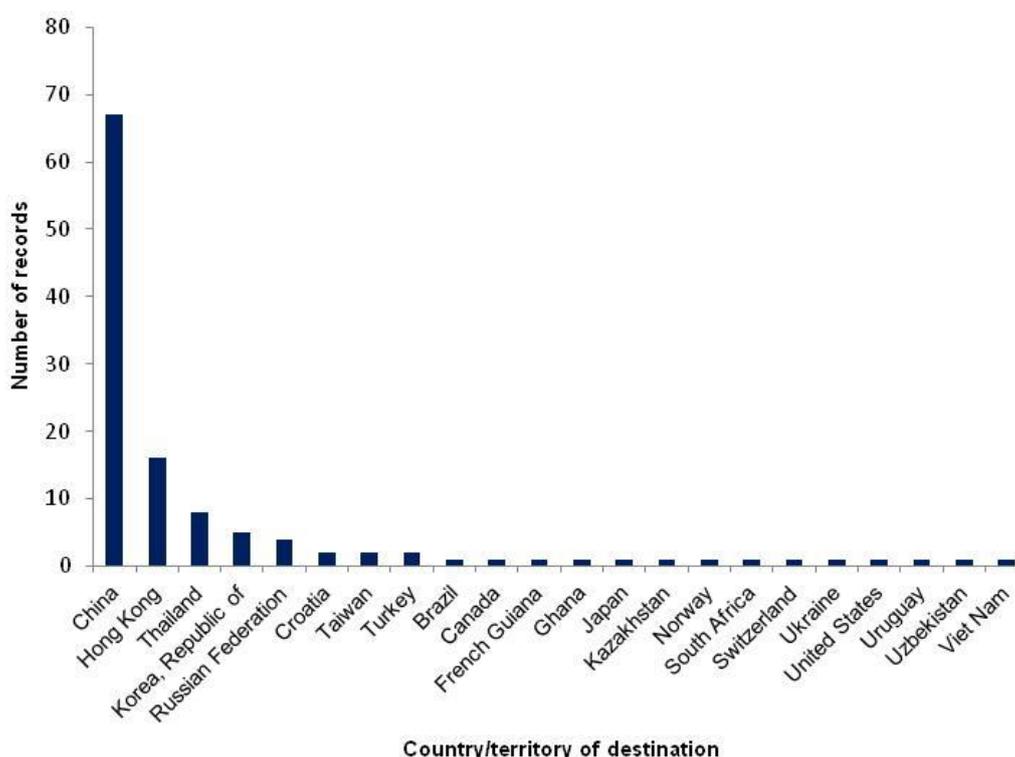
<sup>5</sup> Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China)

**Figure 2: Main countries/territories of departure of illegal trade as reported by 17 EU Member States (international seizures), according to number of seizure records, 2012**



Source: seizure reports by 17 EU Member States

**Figure 3: Main countries/territories of destination of illegal trade from the EU (to non-EU countries only) as reported by 17 Member States, according to number of seizure records, 2012**



Source: seizure reports by 17 EU Member States

### 3. DETAILS OF KEY INDIVIDUAL INTERNATIONAL SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER STATES IN 2012

**Table 1** contains details of key individual seizures reported by EU Member States for the period January to December 2012. 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 2012 arranged by commodity type** (reporting country in bold)

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
<b>MEDICINALS</b>				
United Arab Emirates	→	<b>UK</b>	285 kg of <b>Agarwood</b> <i>Aquilaria</i> spp. (App. I/Annex B) timber chips (one of over 100 such seizures reported by the UK in 2012). Targeting also carried out at airports.	Targeted at a maritime port <b>(Jun 2012)</b>
Switzerland	→	<b>Germany</b>	2700 tablets containing <b>Costus Root</b> <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A) (one of several such seizures that took place in Germany in 2012)	Seized at a postal centre <b>(Jul 2012)</b>
Hong Kong	→ <b>Netherlands</b> →	<b>UK</b>	276 480 tablets (57.6 kg) containing <b>Costus Root</b> <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A). Several seizures of medicinals containing Costus Root were also reported by the UK in 2012, exported from Hong Kong and China).	Random control at a Dutch maritime port <b>(Sept 2012)</b>

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
Hong Kong		<b>UK</b>	50 280 tablets containing <b>Hoodia</b> <i>Hoodia gordonii</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at a postal centre based on risk assessment ( <b>Apr 2012</b> )
China, Hong Kong, Singapore		<b>Hungary</b>	61 seizures involving <b>Hoodia</b> <i>Hoodia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). Total of 9518 packets, each containing 30 tablets.	By post or courier ordered via the internet ( <b>Feb – Jul 2012</b> )
USA		<b>UK</b>	2 160 000 tablets containing <b>Cape Aloe</b> <i>Aloe ferox</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at a maritime port based on risk assessment ( <b>Oct 2012</b> )
Peru	<b>Netherlands</b>	China	2578 dead <b>seahorses</b> <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Detected in personal luggage at airport ( <b>Feb 2012</b> )
Guinea	<b>Belgium</b>	China	500 dead <b>seahorses</b> <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). One of several such seizures in Belgium in 2012.	Targeting of transiting passenger luggage based on risk assessment ( <b>Aug 2012</b> )
Liberia	<b>Belgium</b>	China	0.5 kg of <b>pangolin</b> scales <i>Manis</i> spp. (app. II/Annex B) <sup>6</sup> . One of several similar seizures that took place in Belgium in 2012.	Detected in luggage of Chinese national in transit at airport ( <b>May 2012</b> )
China	<b>Netherlands</b>	Ghana	540 000 tablets (630 kg) containing <b>pangolin</b> <i>Manis</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Random control at a Dutch airport ( <b>Oct 2012</b> )
Nepal	<b>Belgium</b>	Uruguay	240 kg of <b>pangolin</b> scales <i>Manis</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	In postal parcel targeted at an airport based on risk assessment ( <b>Mar 2012</b> )
South Africa		<b>Slovakia</b>	Seizures of a total of 8 <b>Southern White Rhinoceros</b> horns <i>Ceratotherium simum simum</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B) from four Czech nationals. Declared as personal and household effects. These seizures were connected to a case involving several rhino horns seized in the <b>Czech Republic</b> , also in 2012.	Targeted at airport based on risk assessment ( <b>Aug 2012</b> )
<b>IVORY</b>				
<b>Belgium</b>		Viet Nam	60.5 kg (13 pieces) of <b>African Elephant</b> ivory <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Targeted at airport based on intelligence. Concealed in antique clocks ( <b>Mar 2012</b> )
Nigeria	<b>Netherlands</b>	Thailand	50 tusks of <b>African Elephant</b> ivory <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Seized at airport (freight) ( <b>Mar 2012</b> )
Burundi	<b>Germany</b>	China	Approx. 6 kg of unworked <b>African Elephant</b> ivory <i>Loxodonta africana</i> App. I/II, Annex A/B). One of several seizures involving ivory exported in postal parcels from Africa (Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda) to China, reported by Germany (and the UK) in 2012.	In postal parcel targeted at an airport based on intelligence ( <b>Aug 2012</b> )

<sup>6</sup> Source: Seizure news items shared by Belgium via CIRCA (the EC's "Communication and Information Resource Centre Administration")

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
Nigeria	→ UK	→ Hong Kong	6.5 kg of worked <b>African Elephant</b> ivory <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B). One of several seizures involving ivory exported in postal parcels from Africa (Burundi, Niger, Nigeria) to Hong Kong, reported by the UK (and Germany) in 2012.	In postal parcel targeted at airport based on risk assessment ( <b>Aug 2012</b> )
Democratic Republic of Congo	→ Germany	→ Turkey	190 pieces (approx. 10 kg) of unworked <b>African Elephant</b> ivory <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Random control of postal parcel at airport ( <b>Sep 2012</b> ) The case involved a controlled delivery and also resulted in an additional seizure of 17 kg of ivory in the business premises of the addressee in Turkey.
<b>LIVE REPTILES</b>				
Tunisia	→ Italy	→ France	57 live <b>Spur-thighed Tortoises</b> <i>Testudo graeca</i> (App. II/Annex A) of wild origin. One of at least 20 seizures at Italian ports and airports involving live specimens of this species exported from North Africa (Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria).	Seizure at maritime port during random control ( <b>May 2012</b> )
Ukraine	→	<b>Poland</b>	197 live <b>Horsfield's Tortoises</b> <i>Testudo horsfieldii</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Seized during controls at land boundary ( <b>Jun 2012</b> )
Albania	→	<b>Italy</b>	88 live <b>Hermann's Tortoises</b> <i>Testudo hermanni</i> (App. II/Annex A) of wild origin. (A total of 94 specimens seized in 2012 from Albania.)	Seized at maritime port during random control ( <b>Jul 2012</b> )
Ghana (origin: Benin)	→ UK	→ Canada	28 live <b>Senegal Chameleons</b> <i>Chamaeleo senegalensis</i> (App. II/Annex B)	Routine seizure at airport ( <b>Jan 2012</b> )
Burundi	→ Belgium	→ Czech Republic	112 live <b>Johnston's Chameleons</b> <i>Chamaeleo johnstoni</i> (App. III/Annex B)	Targeted at airport based on risk assessment ( <b>Apr 2012</b> )
<b>REPTILE BODIES, PARTS AND DERIVATIVES</b>				
China	→ Estonia	→ Russian Federation	79 coloured <b>Reticulated Python</b> <i>Python reticulatus</i> skins (App. III/Annex B). Hidden amongst other goods. Part of longer term trend.	Vehicle containing skins targeted ( <b>Jan 2012</b> )
Panama	→	<b>Spain</b>	959 tails of <b>Common Caiman</b> <i>Caiman crocodilus</i> (App. I/II, Annex A/B)	Seized due to incorrect marking ( <b>Feb 2012</b> )
<b>CAVIAR</b>				
United Arab Emirates	→ Italy	→ Belgium	19 kg of <b>Beluga Sturgeon</b> <i>Huso huso</i> (App. III/Annex B) caviar. Concealed in postal parcel amongst caviar substitute.	Seized following random control at airport ( <b>Jul 2012</b> )
<b>CORALS</b>				
Viet Nam	→	<b>UK</b>	723 kg of <b>stony coral</b> <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at airport based on risk assessment ( <b>May 2012</b> )
Indonesia	→	<b>Netherlands</b>	680 kg of <b>stony coral</b> <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Seized at airport due to incorrect permit ( <b>Sep 2012</b> )

TRADE ROUTE			Species and quantity seized	Details
Export	Transit	Destination		
Fiji		<b>UK</b>	Seizure of 1371 kg of <b>stony coral</b> <i>Acropora</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B)	Targeted at airport based on intelligence <b>(Nov 2012)</b>
<b>LIVE INVERTEBRATES</b>				
Ghana	 Turkey	 <b>Hungary</b>	503 live <b>Emperor Scorpions</b> <i>Pandinus imperator</i> (App. II/Annex B).	Targeted at airport based on risk assessment <b>(May 2012)</b>
<b>TIMBER</b>				
Cameroon		<b>Italy</b>	Around 51 m <sup>3</sup> <b>African Teak</b> <i>Pericopsis elata</i> (App. II/Annex B).	Seized at maritime port due to incorrect permit <b>(Jul 2012)</b>
Nepal		<b>Netherlands</b>	22 300 <b>Red Sandalwood</b> <i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> (App. II/Annex B) timber chips.	Seized following random control at airport <b>(Aug 2012)</b>

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

#### 4. BRIEF COMPARISON TO 2011

A comprehensive and quantitative comparison of seizures reported in 2011 and 2012 is not possible due to, among other things, the difference in the number of EU Member States reporting seizures in these two years (in 2011 a total of 14 EU Member States reported 667 seizure records, whereas in 2012, 17 EU Member States reported 967 seizure records). However, some interesting observations can be made when comparing these two years.

The commodity groups involved in the seizures were broadly the same in 2011 as in 2012, although their order of importance (in terms of number of reported seizure records) shifted slightly between the two years. In particular, the proportion of reported seizure records involving ivory increased in 2012, causing it to rise to the second most frequently seized commodity in the EU in 2012, from third in 2011. The commodity group “medicinals” ranked first in both years.

When comparing the main countries/territories of export or of departure reported for 2011 and 2012 (based on number of seizure records) the following can be noted:

- i) in 2012, the **United Arab Emirates** ranked as top country of export of illegal trade entering the EU (with 133 seizure records, nearly all seizures of Agarwood), representing a notable rise in the number of seizure records compared with 2011 (17 records reported).
- ii) **Nigeria** and **Burundi** featured more prominently in 2012, primarily due to an increase in the number of records involving **ivory** reported as coming from these countries in 2012; and
- iii) **Morocco** appeared as a more important country of export/departure in 2012, reflecting an increase in the number of seizure records involving **live reptiles** reported as coming from this country in 2012.

When looking at the countries of destination of illegal trade detected in the EU, **China** ranked first in both 2011 and 2012.