

# SDG indicator metadata

(Harmonized metadata template - format version 1.1)

## 0. Indicator information (SDG\_INDICATOR\_INFO)

### 0.a. Goal (SDG\_GOAL)

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

### 0.b. Target (SDG\_TARGET)

Target 15.c: Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities

### 0.c. Indicator (SDG\_INDICATOR)

Indicator 15.c.1: Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked

### 0.d. Series (SDG\_SERIES\_DESCR)

ER\_WLD\_TRPOACH - Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked [15.7.1,15.c.1]

### 0.e. Metadata update (META\_LAST\_UPDATE)

2024-09-27

### 0.f. Related indicators (SDG\_RELATED\_INDICATORS)

Not applicable

### 0.g. International organisations(s) responsible for global monitoring

(SDG\_CUSTODIAN\_AGENCIES)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

## 1. Data reporter (CONTACT)

### 1.a. Organisation (CONTACT\_ORGANISATION)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

## 2. Definition, concepts, and classifications (IND\_DEF\_CON\_CLASS)

### 2.a. Definition and concepts (STAT\_CONC\_DEF)

#### Definition:

The share of all trade in wildlife detected as being illegal

#### Concepts:

“All trade in wildlife” is the sum of the values of legal and illegal trade

“Legal trade” is the sum of the value of all shipments made in compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), using valid CITES permits and certificates.

“Illegal trade” is the sum of the value of all CITES/listed specimens seized.

## 2.b. Unit of measure (UNIT\_MEASURE)

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Percent (%)

## 2.c. Classifications (CLASS\_SYSTEM)

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The Checklist of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is used to assign values to each of the species and specimens traded, either legally or seized. Species. More information at <https://checklist.cites.org/#/en>.

## 3. Data source type and data collection method (SRC\_TYPE\_COLL\_METHOD)

### 3.a. Data sources (SOURCE\_TYPE)

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The legal trade data are reported annually by Parties to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and stored in the CITES Trade Database, managed by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge.

The detected illegal trade data is collected through two main databases: a) the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) database called “World WISE”, which combines a variety of data sources on individual illicit wildlife seizures, and b) the CITES Illegal Trade Database, which contains data reported by CITES Parties through the Annual Illegal Trade Reports (see [https://cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Annual\\_Illegal\\_trade\\_report](https://cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Annual_Illegal_trade_report)).

The US LEMIS price data for CITES-listed species are also provided to UNEP-WCMC within the U.S. annual report to CITES, and are used for valuation<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.b. Data collection method (COLL\_METHOD)

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Some adjustment/validation is necessary between countries, but standardized codes for the legal wildlife trade have been developing since 1975. The basic fields necessary for the global indicator (species, product, and unit) are well established and present in every seizure. Some unit conversions (e.g. logs to MT to m3 for timber) are necessary for some products. To do regional or national breakdowns, however, data on the source of the shipment are necessary (as the impact of poaching pertains to the source country, not the seizure country), and these data are not available for every seizure.

### 3.c. Data collection calendar (FREQ\_COLL)

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The first data collection cycle for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Annual Illicit Trade Reports (AITR) took place in 2017. Since then, these reports are collected every year, with a deadline of October 31 for submission by CITES Parties. Data reported through AITR have been processed and put together into the CITES Illegal Trade Database<sup>2</sup> in 2023-2024, and the database was launched in November 2023 and is now available for CITES Parties.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/office-law-enforcement-importexport-data>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://citesdata.un.org/>

As for the data collected for the World WISE database, these are collected in an ad-hoc basis based on sources availability and partnerships. Data from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), for example, are collected regularly and included into World WISE.

Data for legal trade are collected by the CITES Secretariat through the CITES Annual Reports and processed by UNEP-WCMC on an annual basis.

### 3.d. Data release calendar (REL\_CAL\_POLICY)

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After a first submission of data in Q2 2024, data will be published annually in Q1.

### 3.e. Data providers (DATA\_SOURCE)

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The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Management Authority of each country provide data for both the CITES Legal and Illegal Trade Databases, through the Annual Reports and AITR. In addition, other sources are used for World WISE, such as the Environmental Investigation Agency, TRAFFIC, the World Customs Organization (WCO), amongst others.

### 3.f. Data compilers (COMPILING\_ORG)

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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for illegal trade data and United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre for legal trade data.

### 3.g. Institutional mandate (INST\_MANDATE)

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Annual Reports (article VIII of the Convention) and AITR (Conf.11.17 – Rev CoP19) are collected by the CITES Secretariat as per their mandate. CITES Secretariat works together with UNODC on the data processing for AITR data, and with UNEP-WCMC for the processing of Annual Reports data.

## 4. Other methodological considerations (OTHER\_METHOD)

### 4.a. Rationale (RATIONALE)

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#### **Rationale:**

There are over 35,000 species under international protection, so it is impossible to monitor all poaching. Illegal trade, however, is an indirect indicator of poaching. Wildlife seizures represent concrete instances of illegal trade, but the share of overall wildlife crime they represent is unknown and variable. In addition, the number of species under international protection continues to grow. Legal international trade in protected species, by definition, is 100% captured in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Trade Database, which now contains over 16 million records of trade in CITES-listed species. To ground the illegal trade data in a complete indicator, the ratio of aggregated seizures to total trade is estimated. An increase in the share of total wildlife trade that is illegal would be interpreted as a negative indicator, and a decrease as a positive one.

Because the illegal wildlife trade represents thousands of distinct products, a means of aggregation is necessary. The legal trade value does not represent the true black market value of the items seized, nor the true value of the legal shipments, because it is derived from a single market source (US LEMIS). It does, however, present a logical and consistent means of aggregating unlike products.

#### 4.b. Comment and limitations (REC\_USE\_LIM)

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- Seizures are an incomplete indicator of trafficking, and subject to considerable volatility, and depend on external factors that may not be directly linked to the volume of flows, such as law enforcement priorities.
- Universal coverage is not presently available, although data are available for a growing number of countries (see section 5).
- Since the indicator looks at the relationship between two values (legal vs illegal trade), changes in the relationship could be due to changes in either value.

#### 4.c. Method of computation (DATA\_COMP)

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The value of a species-product unit is derived from the median price declared for legal imports of analogous species product units, as acquired from United States Law Enforcement Monitoring and Information System of the Fish and Wildlife Service (US LEMIS). Particularly, the median values for each TAXON/DESCRIPTION OF SPECIMEN/UNIT OF MEASUREMENT possible combination were used to assign a value to each legal trade and seizure record. Some additional sources (for cases where US LEMIS data were not available or were unreliable) were used, such as estimates based on field research from UNEP-WCMC and UNODC. Also, median values of combinations that were outliers, based on small sample sizes or had high variability were excluded from the calculations.

The value of legal trade is the sum of all species-product units documented in Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) export permits as reported in the CITES Annual Reports times the species-product unit prices as specified above.

The value of illegal trade is the sum of all species-product units documented in the World WISE seizure and CITES Illegal Trade databases times the species-product unit prices as specified above.

The indicator is defined as:

$$\frac{\textit{Value of illegal trade}}{\textit{Value of illegal trade} + \textit{Value of legal trade}}$$

#### 4.d. Validation (DATA\_VALIDATION)

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Data received go through a validation process that includes consistency checks, standardization of variables and conversion of measurement units. Due to the variety of sources involved, a deduplication process takes place, where records representing events identified as being reported by multiple sources are clustered, and only one is kept, to avoid double-counting. Large seizures are individually analysed to ensure there is no double-counting that could significantly affect totals.

Finally, the data used are periodically shared with countries for their review as part of the process of “pre-publication” for UNODC World Wildlife Crime Reports (as done in October 2023), and the compiled 15.7.1 indicators are shared with countries for their review before submission to the United Nations Statistical Department (UNSD).

#### 4.e. Adjustments (ADJUSTMENT)

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Not applicable

#### 4.f. Treatment of missing values (i) at country level and (ii) at regional level (IMPUTATION)

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- **At country level**  
For legal trade, data reported by other countries is used to impute the totals exported and imported at the national level.
- **At regional and global levels**  
As above

#### 4.g. Regional aggregations (REG\_AGG)

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Not applicable

#### 4.h. Methods and guidance available to countries for the compilation of the data at the national level (DOC\_METHOD)

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Countries can provide data through the CITES. Information and guidelines can be found at [https://cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Annual\\_Illegal\\_trade\\_report](https://cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Annual_Illegal_trade_report) and [https://cites.org/eng/imp/reporting\\_requirements/annual\\_report](https://cites.org/eng/imp/reporting_requirements/annual_report)

#### 4.i. Quality management (QUALITY\_MGMNT)

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A thorough validation process is implemented to ensure high quality of the data, as described in Section 4.d. When inconsistencies are found, UNODC contacts the data providers, either countries in the case of AITR (with the support of CITES) or other organizations in the case of data in World WISE. The prepublication process described in Section 4.d is part of UNODC's general quality management process.

#### 4.j Quality assurance (QUALITY\_ASSURE)

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The deduplication process described in Section 4.d is implemented not only for wildlife-related seizures databases, but also for other databases within UNODC, such as the Drugs Monitoring Platform. In this sense, a comprehensive deduplication protocol is implemented to ensure high quality in all datasets and to take into account the singularities of each.

#### 4.k Quality assessment (QUALITY\_ASSMNT)

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A specific assessment of the deduplication process was implemented in June 2022, and it was found that the proportion of false negatives and false positives was relatively small in the dataset at the time.

### 5. Data availability and disaggregation (COVERAGE)

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#### **Data availability:**

As of July 2024, data for the indicator are available for 98 countries and territories.

**Time series:**

Data for 2016 onwards are available for this indicator.

**Disaggregation:**

Where source data are available, the data are disaggregated by plant and animal species. As a form of trade data, issues of gender, age, and disability status are not applicable.

## 6. Comparability / deviation from international standards (COMPARABILITY)

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**Sources of discrepancies:**

The global figure is the ratio of the aggregate of national figures provided by countries for the numerator and denominator of the indicator as defined in 4.c.

## 7. References and Documentation (OTHER\_DOC)

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**URL:**

[www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)

**References:**

[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/Methodological\\_Annex\\_final.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/Methodological_Annex_final.pdf)

[http://trade.cites.org/cites\\_trade\\_guidelines/en-CITES\\_Trade\\_Database\\_Guide.pdf](http://trade.cites.org/cites_trade_guidelines/en-CITES_Trade_Database_Guide.pdf)

CITES Annual Reports: [https://cites.org/eng/imp/reporting\\_requirements/annual\\_report](https://cites.org/eng/imp/reporting_requirements/annual_report)

CITES AITR: [https://cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Annual\\_Illegal\\_trade\\_rep](https://cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Annual_Illegal_trade_rep)