

Workshop Summary and Recommendations

International Workshop on Sustainable Utilization and Management of CITES-listed Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the Himalayas *Chongqing University, China | 26–30 August 2025*

Himalayan forests and rangelands are exceptional global biodiversity hotspots, renowned for their unique medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs). Highly valued in traditional and modern medicine, among other uses, many of these plants are harvested and traded internationally, contributing significantly to local livelihoods. Their ecological and economic importance underscores the critical need to conserve these unique resources.

However, these same resources and the livelihoods they support are threatened by unsustainable overharvesting of wild MAPs, climate change, illegal trade and inequitable supply chains. Significant opportunities exist both to improve sustainability and legality of harvest and trade in wild-harvested MAPs through increased scientific and practical cooperation between the stakeholders in the region, and to strengthen sustainable and equitable trade links to major markets. Given the shared landscapes and challenges surrounding the sustainability of harvesting and trade and the making of non-detriment findings (NDFs), regional and international collaboration is key.

China has taken the lead in promoting cooperation and sustainable development in the Himalayan region, leveraging its scientific expertise and policy frameworks to address ecological challenges and ensure the long-term viability of these resources.

The **International Workshop on Sustainable Utilization and Management of CITES-listed Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the Himalayas**, which took place in Chongqing, China, on 26-30 August 2025, brought together government, intergovernmental organisations, including CITES Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Program, academic and non-governmental organization (NGO) stakeholders to discuss the management of CITES-listed MAPs species in the Himalayan range.

Chongqing University, Endangered Species Scientific Commission of the People's Republic of China and TRAFFIC, convened this workshop to strengthen regional cooperation, share technical knowledge and recent scientific findings, and advance sustainable management aligned with CITES obligations. The meeting brought together over 50 stakeholders (in person and online) from ten countries, including representatives from Nepal, India, Singapore, South Africa, Brazil, the EU, the UK and others along the trade chain.

The workshop supported the implementation of CITES Decisions *19.261 to 19.264 on Trade in medicinal and aromatic plant species* and contributes to implementing recommendations of the report *CITES-listed medicinal and aromatic plant (MAP) species in international trade* (CoP20 Inf.1), as well as preparation for the agenda item 100. *Trade in medicinal and aromatic plant species* at the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES.

The workshop focussed on the range of key topics identified by participants as priorities for advancing the sustainable use and management of Himalayan MAPs:

1. Sustainable trade of high-altitude species in Himalayan range, with the focus on *Nardostachys grandiflora*, including resource assessment, harvesting management, production efficiency and policy incentives.
2. CITES NDFs for MAPs - methodologies and practical implementation cases for perennial plant species, incorporating local and traditional knowledge, social-ethnobotanical investigation and considering the livelihoods of local communities.
3. Trade traceability systems for CITES-listed MAPs - experience sharing, best practices and frameworks, including voluntary certification systems.
4. Regional cooperation for sustainable future of Himalayan wild-harvested MAPs.

Key Workshop Themes and Discussions

CITES Implementation and Policy Frameworks

- **NDF Methodologies:** Participants examined case studies from China, India, and Nepal, highlighting structured risk assessments, integration of scientific data and local and traditional knowledge, and adaptive feedback loops.
- ***Nardostachys grandiflora*** served as a focal species for applying NDF principles across different countries, demonstrating how ecological and socio-economic data inform sustainable harvest quotas.
- **National Management Systems:** Emphasis on tiered permitting, species-specific protection levels, and harmonized monitoring frameworks. South African cycad case studies and medicinal-food research in the Gaoligong Mountains provided transferable lessons in balancing traditional use with conservation imperatives.
- **Enforcement:** Tackling illegal trade via coordinated border inspections, data sharing, and capacity-building for enforcement agencies; development of user-friendly field-identification materials for MAP specimens and deployment of technology to improve data collection and monitoring of priority populations.

Evidence-based Resource Management

- **Inventories and Monitoring:** Calls for comprehensive baseline assessments through regional, national and sub-national surveys (e.g., Himalayan biodiversity or Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau studies).
- **Red List Assessments:** The urgent need to assess conservation status at global, regional, and national levels; many species remain unclassified; opportunity to revisit the global IUCN Red List assessment based on new information for species such as *Nardostachys grandiflora*.
- **In-situ and Ex-situ Conservation:** Expanding protected areas, establishing genetic repositories, and leveraging botanical gardens for restoration initiatives. Establishment of community-based conservation projects and nurseries to promote artificial propagation of in-demand species.

Sustainable Harvesting and Livelihoods

- **Community Empowerment:** Integrating local and traditional knowledge into resource management and policy making, including community monitoring approaches, incentivizing stewardship, and diversifying income streams to reduce over-dependence on wild harvests.
- **Capacity Development and Maximizing Benefits:** Understanding harvesting behaviour and decision-making, building capacity for sustainable harvesting, increasing transparency of trade chains, promoting value-addition through product processing and certification.
- **Guidelines and Standards:** Introduction of draft sustainable collection guidelines for endangered wild plants: stressing rotational harvest, employment of sustainable collection techniques and tools, seasonal restrictions, and habitat sensitivity.

Trade Traceability and Market Transparency

- **Traceability Models:** Showcasing examples from China's traceability system for MAPs extracts, non-timber forest product certification, Nepal's emerging traceability systems, international voluntary certification standards suitable for CITES-listed MAP species, and digital solutions connecting across supply chains from harvesters to end products.
- **Market Analysis:** Understanding demand drivers in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) markets, product visibility, and consumer awareness campaigns.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Leveraging voluntary certification schemes, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and sustainable trade projects to drive compliance and market value.

Regional Cooperation

- **Collaborative Networks:** Establishing regional science and policy platforms to share data, standardize protocols, and coordinate responses to illegal and unsustainable trade.
- **Joint Protected Areas:** Proposals for trans-boundary conservation landscapes to safeguard critical habitats.
- **Resource Mobilisation:** Identifying and prioritizing of funding resources for conservation and sustainable management of Himalayan MAPs, including to safeguard and sustainably utilize wild populations as well as empowering impoverished rural communities to run nurseries to supply the market through artificial propagation.

Recommendations

Based on workshop outcomes, the following recommendations were agreed by participants:

Implementation of CITES and Relevant National Policies

- Harmonize CITES implementation measures among countries along the global trade chain of Himalayan MAPs, including aligned NDF methodologies for MAPs.
- Institutionalize national MAP management systems with clear species categorisation, permitting rules, and adaptive management triggers.
- Support the development and provision of identification guidance and tools to facilitate CITES implementation at the border.

Knowledge, Data and Collaborative Research

- Fund and coordinate region-wide resource inventories of Himalayan MAPs, and establish a shared Himalayan MAPs data repository for governments, researchers, and conservation practitioners.
- Utilize and contribute to existing international platforms—the CITES NDF database, Species Use Database (SpUD), Medicinal Plant Names Services (MPNS), and IUCN Red List, with a priority on data-deficient species.
- Support ongoing ecological and socio-economic research to refine sustainable harvest parameters and forecast market trends, and facilitate the improved reporting and collation of trade data in Himalayan MAPs at national and regional levels.
- Support research and promote regional exchange of technological and technical advances supporting sustainable management of Himalayan MAPs, including remote sensing, traceability technologies, improvements in raw materials processing efficiency, and species regeneration (including cultivation).
- Encourage bi-lateral discussions and information-sharing between Himalayan range states exporting MAPs and importing countries.

Community Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihoods

- Embed local communities as co-managers through participatory planning, benefit sharing schemes, and recognition of traditional practices.
- Roll-out capacity-building on sustainable harvesting, including opportunities for learning across harvesting groups and communities.
- Maximize benefits through value-added approaches, such as improved processing, voluntary certification, and more direct supply chains for market access.
- Intensify community engagement and awareness raising within the communities whose livelihood depends on harvest and trade in MAPs.

Trade Transparency and Consumer Awareness

- Scale up traceability pilots into national systems with cross-border interoperability.

- Facilitate industry engagement via traceability requirements, sustainability certifications, and incentives for sourcing from verified sustainable operations.
- Launch consumer campaigns in key markets (e.g., TCM, Ayurveda, European well-being products) to create demand for verified sustainable products.

Regional Cooperation Mechanisms

- Establish regional multi-stakeholder forum - including private sector and communities - to share data, bottom-up vs top-down approaches, tools, and coordinate efforts on sustainable management of Himalayan MAPs, at the Sustainability Forum in Nepal, 2026.
- Formalize a Himalayan MAPs Regional Working Group under CITES auspices; ensure representatives of the Himalayan MAPs community participate in any future in-session or intersessional CITES working groups - such as the drafting group for the proposed CITES Resolution on MAPs. Meet annually or biennially to review progress and share data.
- Mobilize funding resources for implementation of priority actions for sustainable use and management of Himalayan MAPs, as well as joint enforcement actions against illegal cross-border MAPs trade.
- Collaborate on contributions to the World Wildlife Day 2026, focussing on Himalayan CITES-listed MAPs, and *Nardostachys grandiflora* in particular, under the theme “*Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: Conserving Health, Heritage and Livelihoods*”.

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