

***The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES):  
Evaluation as a Conservation Tool for North Atlantic Bluefin Tuna***

Laura Faitel Cimo

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It is estimated that illegal trade in wildlife may total more than \$20 billion annually. The main international treaty governing wildlife trade is the U.N. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The goal of this convention is to regulate the international trade of species of animals and plants to ensure that commercial demand and international trade do not threaten their survival. Animals and plants that are listed in appendices of the Convention are subject to varying degrees of trade regulation. Species are listed based upon their biological status, management, and the role of international trade.

The effectiveness of multilateral trade instruments, such as CITES, in reversing the decline of marine species remains in question. To help evaluate CITES as a conservation tool for marine species, I will examine a pending proposal to list North Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) in Appendix I of CITES, which would prohibit international trade of this species, as a case study. The spawning stock biomass of this species has significantly declined over the last several decades due to fishing quotas set in excess of scientific recommendations, illegal and unreported fishing activities, and poor compliance with international rules in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean. Commercial demand and international trade appear to be contributing to overfishing and the decline of this species. An analysis demonstrates that a CITES listing could provide conservation benefits for North Atlantic bluefin tuna.