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## Status, challenges and pathways to the sustainable use of wild species

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### Abstract

The use of wild species is extensive in both high- and low-income countries. At least 50,000 wild species are used by billions of people around the world for food, energy, medicine, material, education or recreation, contributing significantly to efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. However, overexploitation remains a major threat to many wild species. Ensuring and enhancing the sustainability of use of wild species is thus essential for human well-being and biodiversity conservation. Globally, the use of wild species is increasing due to growing human demand and efficiency, but its sustainability varies and depends on the social-ecological contexts in which the use occurs. Multiple environmental and social (including economic) drivers affect the sustainability of use of wild species, posing major current and future challenges. In particular, climate change has already increased the vulnerability of many uses and is expected to increase it further in the coming decades, while global and illegal trades are, in many cases, key drivers of unsustainability. There is no single “silver bullet” policy to address these and other major challenges in the sustainable use of wild species. Rather, effective policies need to integrate inclusive actions at multiple scales that adopt right-based approaches, pay attention to equitable distribution of access and costs and benefits, employ participatory processes, strengthen monitoring programs and support context-specific policies, as well as adaptive management.

**Keywords:** sustainability, biodiversity, wild animals, wild plants, IPBES

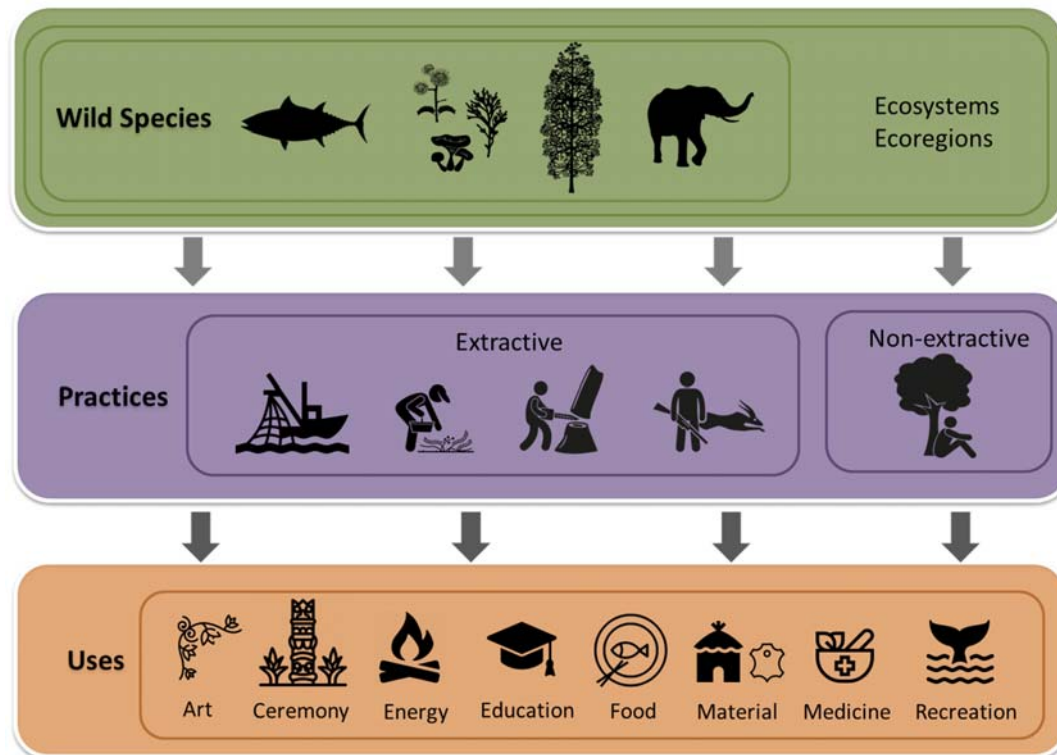
## 1. Introduction

Billions of people in all regions of the world benefit from and often rely on the use of wild species for food, medicine, energy, materials, income, and non-material values (IPBES, 2022b). Concurrently, direct human exploitation of wild species has been identified as one of the main drivers of biodiversity decline in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems (Díaz et al., 2019). For example, 37% of shark, ray and chimera species, 12% of wild tree species, 1,340 wild mammal species and many wild cactus, cycad, and orchid species are threatened with extinction due to unsustainable use (IUCN, 2020; Dulvy et al., 2021; IPBES, 2022b). Nonetheless, human use of wild species is not always and everywhere detrimental and there are many examples of sustainable use of wild species throughout the world, as well as successful efforts to restore populations that have been severely overexploited, such as vicuña and eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna (Lichtenstein, 2009; Fromentin et al., 2014).

The scale and extent of use of wild species has been the subject of several international assessments, such as those by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2020b, a) and by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) at global (IPBES, 2019) and regional levels (IPBES, 2018a, b, c, d). These assessments provide strong background on the status and trends of biodiversity as a whole and on some specific groups of wild species, such as fishes or trees and their associated practices (fishing and logging). However, the status of many other groups of wild species commonly used by people (e.g. vascular plants, mushrooms and insects) and several key practices (gathering, hunting, and nature-based tourism, Figure 1), remain poorly documented. Therefore, IPBES launched the first comprehensive intergovernmental effort, carried out by 85 independent experts from 37 countries and more than 200 contributing authors, to document the status and trends of all types of use of wild species worldwide and to provide policy- and solution-oriented approaches that ensure and enhance sustainable use of wild species while recognizing the diversity of practices, uses and contexts (IPBES, 2022c). Here, we report the key findings of this assessment.

## 2. Sustainable use of wild species is critical for people and biodiversity conservation

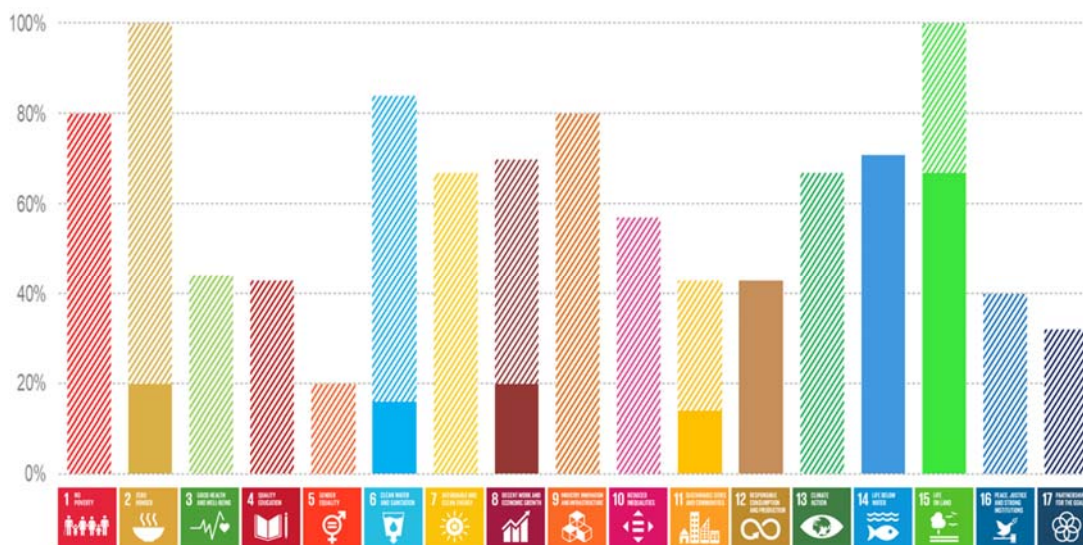
The concept of sustainable use has evolved through time and differs among cultures. Nonetheless, the scientific literature on this topic, particularly prior to the 21st century, came mainly from authors from high-income countries, which strongly influenced international agreements and other policy documents negotiated in the last half century (see section 2.2 in Rice et al., 2022). Since the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 1992, the cultural practices and traditional livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities (often closely tied to nature) have been increasingly recognized by international bodies, including IPBES (Hill et al., 2020) and are prominent in the Global Biodiversity Framework (<https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>). Modern conceptualizations revolve around the idea that sustainable use emerges from the dynamics of social-ecological systems that maintain biodiversity and ecosystem functions in the long-term while contributing to human needs and well-being (IPBES, 2022b). Critically, sustainable use of wild species encompasses both social (including economic) and ecological considerations, as well as the multiple aspects of their interactions (Cooney, 2007; Ostrom, 2009). It is a dynamic process, as wild species, the ecosystems that support them and the social systems within which uses occur, change over time and space.



**Figure 1 Categories of wild species, practices and uses.** Four general categories of wild species: aquatic animals, plants (excluding trees) together with algae and fungi, trees and terrestrial animals are separated because of differences in the status of use, the practices of these groups and the policy options for managing them. The use of these groups of wild species takes place in various ecosystems and ecoregions. Practices are split into extractive (including fishing, gathering, logging and terrestrial animal harvesting) and non-extractive ones. Uses have been divided into eight categories, which are not mutually exclusive.

The contributions of wild species to human well-being are vital and occur through many types of uses (Figure 1), which can be continuous and quotidian or episodic and occasional (IPBES, 2022b). About 50,000 wild species are documented to be used, including 7,500 species of wild fish and aquatic invertebrates, 31,100 species of wild plants (including 7,400 species of trees), 1,500 species of fungi, 1,700 species of wild terrestrial invertebrates and 7,500 species of wild amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals (section 3.2.1 in Barron et al., 2022). Among those, more than 10,000 species are used for human food, making the sustainable use of wild species critical for achieving food security and improving nutrition in rural and urban areas worldwide. For instance, marine and freshwater fisheries constitute a key source of protein, fat, and micronutrients for people worldwide (Hicks et al., 2019). With a total annual harvest of 90 million tons, about 60 million tons are consumed directly by humans and 30 million tons are used as feed for aquaculture and livestock (FAO, 2020a). Terrestrial animal harvesting (of which hunting is the primary form) also contributes to the food security of many people living in rural and urban areas worldwide, especially in low-income countries (Coad et al., 2019). Wild plants, algae and fungi provide food, nutritional diversity, and income for an estimated one in five people around the world, while 2.4 billion people, especially in low-income countries, are estimated to rely on biomass for cooking and heating (OECD/IEA, 2017; Sorrenti, 2017). Uses of wild species are also important sources of income and form the basis for economically and culturally important activities worldwide. Annual trade in wild plants, algae and fungi is estimated to be worth over \$1 billion and the establishment of supply chains can fuel economic development and diversification

(Sorrenti, 2017). Fishing, logging, and nature-based tourism are vital to regional and local employment and economies worldwide and contribute to public infrastructure, development and provisioning of related goods and services (Balmford et al., 2015; FAO, 2020a, b). The use of wild species also provides non-material contributions by enriching people's physical and psychological experiences, including their religious, spiritual and ceremonial lives (Russell et al., 2013). In many cases, a single species may have multiple uses and contributes to human well-being in multiple ways (section 1.3.4 in Fromentin et al., 2022).



**Figure 2** Acknowledged and overlooked contributions of sustainable use of wild species to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Each percentage represents the number of targets in an SDG to which sustainable use of wild species can contribute out of the total number of targets in that SDG. Plain color bars represent the percentage of targets for which the potential contributions of sustainable use of wild species is already acknowledged. Hatched color bars indicate the percentage of additional targets that sustainable use of wild species could contribute.

The use of wild species supports peoples’ basic needs worldwide and contributes to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). People living in vulnerable conditions are often the most reliant on wild species and would benefit directly from more sustainable uses to secure their livelihoods. An estimated 70% of the world’s poor depend directly on biodiversity and on businesses it fosters (UNCTAD, 2017). Supporting and enhancing sustainable use of wild species would thus make direct and significant contributions to meeting many SDGs (Figure 2), in particular the goals of “no poverty” (Goal 1), “zero hunger” (Goal 2), “clean water and sanitation” (Goal 6), “affordable and clean energy” (Goal 7), “decent work and economic growth” (Goal 8), “industry, innovation and infrastructure” (Goal 9), “reduced inequalities” (Goal 10), “climate action” (Goal 13), and “life below water and on land” (Goals 14 and 15). However, these potential contributions remain largely overlooked in current global policies (Figure 2) and deserve greater attention (see section 1.6 in Fromentin et al., 2022).
















Sustainable use of wild species is also central to the identity and culture of many indigenous peoples and local communities, contributing to their livelihoods through subsistence and trade in formal and informal markets. The cultures and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities are diverse, but usually include common values regarding the use of wild species, such as an obligation to engage nature with respect, reciprocal responsibilities, avoid waste, and manage harvests for fair and equitable distribution of benefits for community well-being (Brondízio et al., 2021). Frequently, these

values are codified in customary institutions and systems of governance that help to ensure sustainable uses of wild species (Comberti et al., 2015; Berkes, 2018). Today, indigenous peoples manage the use of wild species on more than 38 million km<sup>2</sup> of land in 87 countries, which occupies over a quarter of the world's land surface and coincides with approximately 40% of terrestrial protected areas and ecologically intact landscapes (Garnett et al., 2018). Globally, rates of deforestation and other forms of ecosystem decline are generally lower in indigenous territories (Sze et al., 2022).

Moving from unsustainable to sustainable use of wild species is also critical for biodiversity conservation because overexploitation remains a major threat to many wild species (Díaz et al., 2019). Further, management systems that promote sustainable use of wild species can contribute to broader conservation objectives that help reverse the current biodiversity decline. For example, effective management systems have contributed to the conservation of species-rich forests at local levels as well as at landscape scale (Dollo et al., 2009). Globally, protected areas receive 8 billion visits for nature-based tourism purposes and generate US\$600 billion per year (Balmford et al., 2015), making significant contributions to overcoming frequent funding shortfalls for the protection of these areas. In some countries, revenues from extractive uses of wild animals, including hunting and fishing licenses and concession fees, deliver an important and substantial income stream that could be allocated to habitat and biodiversity protection, provided rights and customary practices of indigenous peoples and local communities in their traditional lands and resources are not over-ridden (UNDP, 2018).

### **3. Status and trends in the uses of wild species**

Globally, the use of wild species is increasing due to the growing human population, consumption and efficiency. However, the status of uses of wild species displays strong disparities according to types and scales of use and the social-ecological contexts in which they occur. Regarding fishing, about 66% of marine wild fish stocks are fished within biologically sustainable levels, whereas 34% are overfished (FAO, 2020a), but this global picture masks strong spatial heterogeneities (Figure 3). In countries or regions with strong fisheries management, fish stocks are, on average, either healthy or increasing in abundance, whereas in countries and regions with less-developed management for commercial fisheries, harvest rates are, on average, 3-fold greater and stocks are in poor shape (Hilborn et al., 2020). For small-scale fisheries that have been assessed around the world, many have been found to be unsustainable or only partially sustainable due to changing social-ecological contexts. This is especially the case in Africa for both inland and marine fisheries and in Asia, Europe, and Latin America for coastal marine fisheries (see section 3.3.1 in Barron et al., 2022). Unintentional bycatch of threatened and protected species is not only unsustainable for many sharks, rays and chimera, but also for several populations of wild marine turtles, seabirds, marine mammals and some bony fishes. Recent advances in monitoring and managing fishing have reduced the mortality of many bycatch species, but global uptake of effective bycatch management measures is severely lagging in many fisheries (Lewison et al., 2014).

Practice	Use category	20-year global trends		Comments
		use	sustainable use	
FISHING 	Food Feed			Corresponds to large-scale fisheries with intensive management, data rich
				Corresponds to large-scale fisheries with weak management, data limited
				Corresponds to small-scale fisheries, based on a range of sources
	Medicine Hygiene			Based on stock status and total weight of products
	Recreation			Data limited
GATHERING 	Food Feed			Based on a range of sources
	Medicine Hygiene			Based on population trends, threatened categories and CITES listing
	Decorative Aesthetic			Based on threatened categories and CITES listing
LOGGING 	Materials Construction			Based on total legal wood removal
	Energy			Based on a range of sources
TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL HARVESTING 	Recreation			Based on population trends, threatened categories and CITES listing
	Food Feed			Based on increasing demand for wild meat in commercial markets, population trends
NON-EXTRACTIVE PRACTICES 	Recreation			Based on amount of tourism revenue generated
	Ceremony Ritual			Data limited
	Medicine Hygiene			Data limited

**Figure 3 Global trends in use and sustainable use of wild species from 2000 to 2020.** The figure only shows the top two to three use categories for each practice, selected based on which uses were best documented in the systematic literature review performed for this IPBES assessment. Trends in use or in sustainable use refer to an assessment of the overall state of use of wild species in relation to the specified practice. The multi-directional arrow depicts highly variable trends across areas or sectors for a given category of practice-use. The colors of the arrows refer to the confidence levels associated with those trends. Grey: inconclusive; Orange: unresolved; Purple: established but incomplete; Blue: well established. Trend in use include all types of use (sustainable and unsustainable ones). Trends in sustainable use specifically refer to whether the intensity and form of use have been deemed sustainable over the 20-year period. Data supporting global trends and regional variations come from practice-based systematic reviews of over 1,600 scientific references.

Trade in wild plants, algae and fungi has increased rapidly over the past 40 years (Figure 3) and is likely to continue to do so, as there is a growing demand for wild species in the food and aromatics industries and to complement chemical medicines, particularly in high-income countries (see section 4.2.4 in Balachander et al., 2022). Although much of the trade in ornamental plants is supplied through cultivation, poaching of ornamental species from the wild is an ongoing problem (Phelps and Webb, 2015). Harvests of plants that have been sustainable in the past may become unsustainable if, for

example, harvesting is undertaken without following established techniques and protocols or if new technologies are employed that increase the volume of harvest or result in damage to the individual specimen (Hernández-Barríos et al., 2015).

The use of natural forests through logging is increasing and will likely continue to do so, in part because production from plantation forests is not expected to match rising global demand (Figure 3). Some destructive logging practices and illegal logging continue to threaten sustainable use of natural forests. Illegal logging has declined in parts of the tropical Americas, as well as parts of the tropical and mountain regions of Asia due to improved monitoring and transboundary collaborations (Hoare, 2015). However, illegal logging has increased in other regions, including Southeast and Northeast Asia and parts of Africa (Guan et al., 2016). About 20% of the world's tropical forests (3.9 million km<sup>2</sup>) are currently subject to selective logging. Selective logging can reduce the impacts of timber harvesting, but the outcomes depend on the planning and techniques used to minimize damage to the residual forest stand, as well as forest soils, flora and fauna (Arets et al., 2011). Logging for energy accounts for 50% of all wood consumed globally (FAO, 2020b). Sustainable fuel wood logging remains a renewable energy opportunity that provides income, heating and cooking in low-income countries where 1.1 billion people have no access to electricity or alternative energy sources, provided air pollution and emissions that contribute to climate change are mitigated (Cornwall, 2017). The use of wood for fuel is declining in several regions, but is increasing in sub-Saharan Africa and accounts for 90% of all timber harvested in Africa. When comparing supply-demand balances, fuel wood demand can be met at global and national scales, but localized shortages and associated forest and woodland degradation occur in areas where people have few alternatives for cooking and heating (FAO, 2020b; IPBES, 2022b).

Unsustainable terrestrial animal harvesting in combination with other factors, such as land degradation or climate change, have led to the decline of many wild populations (Figure 3). In tropical areas, the sustainability of hunting for food has been negatively affected by social changes, such as the introduction of cash market economies, global trade, urbanization, and road infrastructure, which have resulted in shifts from local-level subsistence towards more intensive wild meat trade (Pangau-Adam et al., 2012). Large mammals are the most targeted species for subsistence and commercial hunting, comprising 55% to 75% of total wild meat biomass hunted annually (see section 3.3.3 in Barron et al., 2022). Considerable regional variations in the way recreational hunting is pursued, governed and administered make any generalization about its sustainability or unsustainability inappropriate. Where species and habitats are well managed and hunting is regulated through strong customary or government institutions, hunting can and does have positive impacts on conservation of wild species and livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities (IUCN, 2016; Begg et al., 2018; Dickman et al., 2019). In a few positive cases, depleted populations are recovering under management systems that allow regulated recreational hunting by generating revenue and increasing the land area for population expansion (Lindsey, 2011). Harvesting live animals for legal or illegal pet trade is also increasing and estimated to affect more than 1,000 species of birds, reptiles, fish and mammals (see section 4.2.4 in Balachander et al., 2022). Although the value of species traded as pets is less than 1% of the total trade of wild species, the number of individuals traded is in the millions.

Nature-based tourism is an important non-extractive practice with wild species. Demand for media (e.g., documentaries) and *in situ* observing (e.g., wildlife watching tourism) related to wild species is growing (Figure 3). Although non-extractive practices are frequently less harmful to wild species and ecosystems than extractive ones, wildlife watching may have unintended detrimental impacts through changes to species behaviour, physiology, or damage to habitats (Toso et al., 2022). Many of the



unsustainable impacts of the tourism industry could be mitigated through context-based understanding, implementation of best practice guidelines, education of tour operators and tourists, collaborative engagement with all stakeholders and sector-specific regulation (IPBES, 2022b). However, the implementation of such regulations can lead to conflict and, at times even spark violence, if not properly incorporated into the local social-ecological system (Sada Guevara, 2020).

#### **4. Drivers of (un)sustainable use of wild species**

The sustainability of use of wild species is influenced by multiple environmental and social (including economic) drivers as well as mediating factors that mitigate or amplify negative impacts at multiple scales. For instance, the sustainability of wild meat hunting is increasingly driven by a shift from primarily subsistence purposes to recreation, entertainment, and both legal and illegal trade (Spira et al., 2019). Environmental drivers, such as landscape and seascape change, climate change, pollution and biological invasions often negatively impact the abundance and distribution of wild species, which can in turn increase stress and challenges among the human communities that use them (Bellard et al., 2016; Musinguzi et al., 2016). These drivers notably land degradation and climate change, also place pressure on the ability of the ecosystems to sustain extractive harvests at previous levels (Hoegh-Guldberg et al., 2018; Hopping et al., 2018). There is also significant inequity in who benefits and who is at risk from unsustainable use of wild species. Rural populations in the Americas, Asia and Africa (nearly 3.5 billion people) rely heavily on the use of wild species (Barrett et al., 2011) and the lack of alternatives for people living in conditions of poverty may make it necessary for them to intensify their pressure on wild species, further depleting a resource in decline and creating a downward spiral. However, the economic and political systems that perpetuate poverty and inequity are the underlying drivers of such unsustainable uses of wild species (Barbier, 2010). Importantly, the inequitable distribution of costs and benefits from the use of wild species greatly undermines its sustainability (Ribot et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2019).

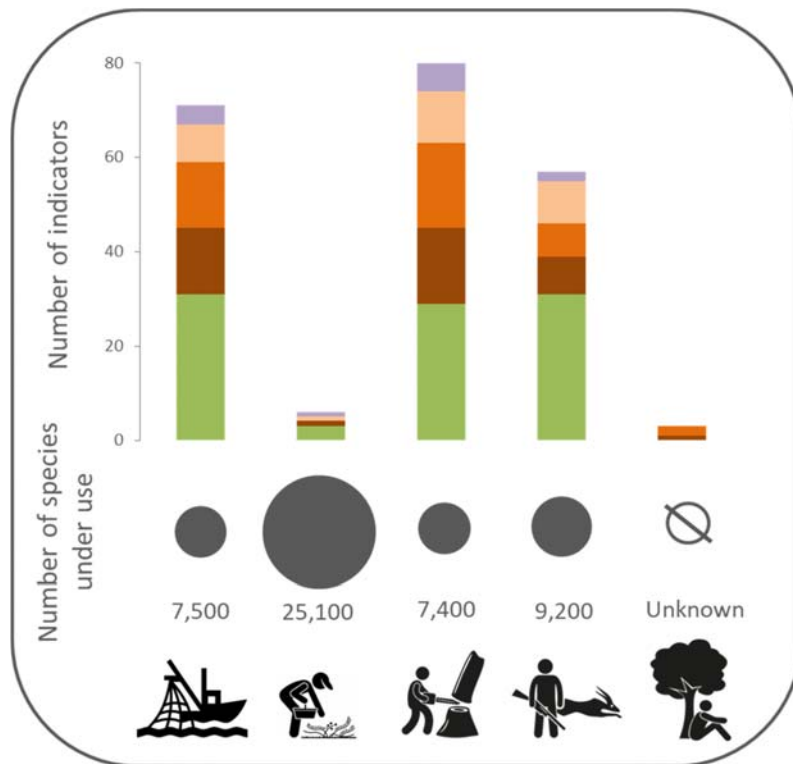
Global trade has expanded considerably over the past 40 years and is a major driver of increased, and often unsustainable, use of wild species (Harfoot et al., 2018). Global trade is an important income source for exporting countries and can be a source of local wealth. However, it decouples the consumption of wild species from their place of origin, introduces infrastructures and dynamics different from those that govern local trade relations and practices. Global trade can also shift governing strategies from collective community actions that previously supported sustainable use to individual or corporate actions that lack the knowledge base and motivations necessary to support long-term sustainability (Wamukota et al., 2014; Stoll et al., 2018). In the absence of functioning regulations that operate across the supply chains, global trade generally increases pressure on wild species, leading to unsustainable use and sometimes to population collapses (Fields et al., 2018). Global trade has also been recognized as a major source of introduction of non-native and invasive species that may displace or otherwise adversely impact local wild species traditionally used by people (Lockwood et al., 2019).

Illegal harvest and trade in wild species occur across all practices and most often lead to unsustainable uses (t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019; UNODC, 2020). Globally, data suggest illegal trade in wild species is the third largest class of illegal trade, with an estimated annual value of US\$ 69-199 billions (World Bank, 2019). Volume and value of illegal trade in wild species is greatest for trees and fishes, but also strongly affects other rare and high value species (Symes et al., 2018; UNODC, 2020). Illegal trade is further associated with social injustices and violent conflicts and may involve criminal networks (World Bank,

2019). For example, the vaquita, a species of porpoise only found in the northern Gulf of California, is currently on the verge of extinction, due to poaching and illegal trade by criminal organizations of an equally endangered, but highly valuable fish known as the totoaba (O'Connor et al., 2022). International cooperation is often required to address illegal harvest and trade (Rosen and Smith, 2010; Tittensor et al., 2020).

Effective governance, institutions and policies can however promote positive outcomes and mitigate negative impacts of such above drivers. For instance, multilateral agreements like those of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and associated legislations have been successful in addressing many aspects of legal and illegal trade and seemingly decreased pressure on some wild species (section 4.2.2 in Balachander et al., 2022). Effort to decrease pressure on wild species has also contributed in an increase in the proportion of farmed specimens in the trade of wild species, notably for fishes, birds, amphibians and plants (Vall-Ilosera and Cassey, 2017; Hierink et al., 2020). Shifts to farmed stocks can indeed reduce harvest impacts on wild populations, provided wild specimens are not specifically in demand and regulations and control are in place to avoid entry of illegally harvested wild specimens into supply chains (Hinsley et al., 2017). Such farming practices (including captive breeding) can however have a negative impact on local livelihoods, equitable sharing of benefits, conservation of natural habitat, *in-situ* management of wild populations and illegal harvesting (Cooney and Jepson, 2006; Lyons and Natusch, 2011; Cooney et al., 2015). These farming practices must also take into account the welfare of farmed animals and the potential introduction of invasive alien species and transmission of zoonotic diseases. Likewise, international policies that support the rights and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities to lands, waters, and customary sustainable uses are effective in many instances, but are often not recognized at national and subnational levels (Popp et al., 2019). As a result, the ability of indigenous peoples and local communities to maintain and restore sustainable uses of wild species continues to face ongoing threats (Atlas et al., 2021).

In many parts of the world, women bear the primary responsibility for feeding their families, collecting, processing, cooking, rationing and storing food, giving women a key role in the sustainable use of wild species (Ingram et al., 2016). In addition, income generated by women from the harvesting of wild species adds to the purchasing power of households (Espinosa, 2010). Nonetheless, gender is seldom taken into account by institutions and policies governing the use of wild species, although the Global Biodiversity Framework recently called attention to the roles and perspectives of women to address the biodiversity crisis (<https://www.iucn.org/story/202212/post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework-gbf-and-environmental-human-rights-defenders>). This general lack of recognition leads to the exclusion of women from decision-making processes and to inequities in the distribution of costs and benefits, often resulting from disparities in property rights and lack of security of tenure and access to wild species (Rohe et al., 2018). Conversely, it has been shown that securing women's participation in decision-making leads to better resource governance and conservation outcomes (Agarwal, 2009; Leisher et al., 2016).



**Figure 4 Wild species used worldwide compared with indicators of sustainable use by practice.** This figure displays the estimated number of wild species used by practice type (fishing, gathering, logging, terrestrial animal harvesting and non-extractive practices), in comparison with the number of widely used global indicators of sustainable use of wild species by practice type. The indicators are grouped as ecological (green), management and monitoring (dark orange), economic (medium orange), governance (light orange) and other (light purple). The terrestrial animal harvesting scoring is based primarily on regional indicators due to the paucity of global indicators.

The lack of comprehensive indicators for monitoring the status and trends in the use of wild species posed major difficulties for assessing the sustainable use of wild species (IPBES, 2022b). Of the hundreds of indicators codified in multilateral agreements, such as the SDGs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, only a small percentage relates specifically to the (sustainable) use of wild species. Further, the sensitivity and specificity of many of these indicators have not been well established (see sections 3.2 and 2.3 in Barron et al., 2022; Rice et al., 2022, respectively). Few scientific studies have developed and used global indicator frameworks for gathering, terrestrial animal harvesting, and nature-based tourism (Figure 4). Indicators of social sustainability are fewer or lacking for all practices, particularly aside from economic and governance indicators (Figure 4). Addressing these limitations will provide more consistent information about the status of uses of wild species and, importantly, support ongoing analyses of the effectiveness of policies and management systems. Monitoring in many indigenous peoples and local communities' land territories often focuses on interlinked social and ecological elements and can inform the development of local and global indicators that recognize these linkages at different scales (Lyver et al., 2017).

## 5. Possible futures

Scenarios projecting the future use of wild species remain scarce and incomplete, especially for gathering, terrestrial animal harvesting, and nature-based tourism. Those available point to a future where sustainable use of wild species becomes increasingly vulnerable to growing human demand,

technological developments, and climate change (IPBES, 2022b). For all practices, demand is closely linked to growing human population and consumption. Unless consumer preferences change, the pressure on wild species and on the management systems in place to ensure sustainable use will continue to increase (Frost et al., 2014; Santos et al., 2017). For example, the demand for gathered wild plants, algae, and fungi will continue to increase both locally, where most products are consumed, as well as in international markets (Bondé et al., 2020), while the demand for (wild and farmed) fish is expected to almost double by 2050 (FAO, 2020a). Current and future technological changes can have a negative impact on the use of wild species through more efficient, more intensive and more rapid extractive practices, or a positive impact through better monitoring, enforcement and reducing impacts of harvesting methods (Yilmaz and Koyuncu, 2019). Climate change has already increased the vulnerability of many uses that are currently sustainable and is expected to increase it further in the future (see section 5.4 in Gasalla et al., 2022). Impacts of climate change on the sustainability of uses include changes in wild species distributions, dynamics and trophic interactions, increased frequency of extreme events, and chemical and ecological modifications (Pörtner et al., 2021). For example, increased intensity and frequency of floods, droughts and wildfires resulting from climate change modify forest composition and productivity (Brando et al., 2019). Climate change is also expected to decrease world fish catch globally, with a particularly pronounced effect in tropical oceans, while creating new opportunities in mid- to high-latitude oceans because of poleward shifts in the ranges of marine species (FAO, 2018). Climate change thus impacts different regions of the world differently, amplifying issues of inequity for many countries that are heavily affected even though they have historically contributed little to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Blasiak et al., 2017). The effects of climate change further interact with other environmental and social drivers and could exacerbate existing social vulnerabilities and inequalities (Hoegh-Guldberg et al., 2018; Boyce et al., 2020).

## **6. Leverage points for transformative change**

Scenarios projecting the future use of wild species indicate that transformative changes are required to meet current and future challenges. To do so, it is essential to move towards a common conceptualization of sustainability while acknowledging diverse value systems (IPBES, 2022a). Ambitious goals are necessary, but insufficient. These high-level goals need to be translated into meaningful and inclusive actions that support the sustainable use of wild species at multiple scales. This IPBES assessment has identified seven key elements of policy action that have been shown to support sustainable use of wild species (see section 6.6 in Park et al., 2022). These seven key elements are all necessary considerations and are listed below in no particular order:






The first key element is the necessity for policy options to be inclusive and participatory. Stakeholder diversity and engagement promote buy-in and collaboration and expand the knowledge base for decision-making through approaches such as co-management, provided power imbalances and conflicts are managed (Castello et al., 2009).

The necessity to recognize and support a plurality of knowledge systems, values and rights represents the second key element. Bringing together scientists and holders of indigenous and local knowledge can create robust information about social and ecological conditions, increase risk tolerances and improve decision-making (He et al., 2011).

Ensuring fair and equitable distribution of access and costs and benefits is the third key element for sustainable use of wild species. People's perceptions of fairness and justice shape their willingness to comply with regulations that govern sustainable use. Inequitable distribution of benefits often

undermines sustainability by fostering over-harvesting, poaching and short-term gains over long-term sustainable management. In contrast, secure rights of access and use and participation in governance mechanisms and accountability positively influence the sustainability of uses of wild species (Orensanz et al., 2013).

The fourth key element emphasizes the need for context-specific policies, i.e. policies that are tailored to their social and ecological contexts. There is indeed no single “silver bullet” recipe that can be applied in all contexts and for all species and practices. Policy instruments and tools commonly fail when they do not take into account the ecological, cultural, political and historical features in which use of wild species take place (Biggs et al., 2019). Actions to empower local communities and respect their rights, access, and customary rules are fundamental to the development of context-specific policies (Tobin, 2008).

Key Elements					
Inclusive and participatory decision-making	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green
Inclusion of multiple forms of knowledge and recognition of rights	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green
Equitable distribution of access and costs and benefits	Light Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green
Policy tailored to local social and ecological context	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green
Monitoring of social and ecological conditions	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green
Coordinated and aligned policies	Dark Green	Light Green	White	Light Green	Light Green
Robust institutions, from customary to statutory	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green	Light Green	Light Green

**Figure 5 Key elements of effective policy for sustainable use of wild species.** Pictograms represent (from left to right): fishing, gathering, logging, terrestrial animal harvesting and non-extractive practices. Color coding is incremental and based on analyses reported in Section 2.2.6 in Rice et al 2022 and summarized in section 6.6 in Park et al. 2022. Light green: key elements present in voluntary agreements (i.e. collaborative partnerships between parties or sectors aiming at improving governance or conservation outcomes, such as the community-based ecotourism organizations). Medium green: key elements present in voluntary agreements and certification schemes (i.e., procedures giving assurance that a use is in conformity with certain standards, such as the Forest Stewardship Council). Dark green: key elements present in voluntary agreements, certification schemes and legally binding agreements (i.e., contracts between parties making the terms and conditions of their relationship mandatory and enforceable, such as the UN agreement on the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks). No color (white): Not present in any of the above three agreement types.

The fifth key element emphasizes the importance of monitoring both social and ecological aspects of uses of wild species. Monitoring is resource intensive and requires substantial commitment and investment to be effective (Schmeller et al., 2017). Co-production of knowledge by scientists and indigenous peoples and local communities (who may have generations of knowledge and customary monitoring practices) can create robust information about the conditions of wild species uses and serve as a basis for monitoring programs, particularly for species and uses for which scientific information is lacking (Brondizio et al., 2021).

Policy instruments also need to be aligned at international, national, regional and local levels to be more effective (which represents the sixth key element). Fewer negative and unintended consequences occur when attention is paid to coordinated interactions among approaches, actors, and scales (Brinckmann et al., 2018). For instance, policies enacted to govern diverse sectors including, but not limited to, agriculture, energy and transportation, often affect uses of wild species (Díaz et al., 2019).

Lastly (i.e. the seventh key element), sustainable use of wild species requires building robust institutions and supporting customary institutions. Institutions that are structured around collaborative and decentralized learning and shared interests in sustainable use are more effective than centralized systems with “top-down” governance. Because the species under use, the ecosystems that support them, and the social systems within which uses occur continuously change over time and space, sustainable use of wild species is an ongoing adaptive process that requires constant negotiation and adaptive management. Therefore, institutions at all scales must be capable of adjusting to changing circumstances to face current and future challenges (Battaglia et al., 2017; Lee, 2018).

These seven key elements have been integrated into many voluntary agreements and certification schemes across all practices, but their uptake is lagging in globally and regionally binding agreements (see section 2.2 in Rice et al., 2022). Fishing is the only practice with globally binding agreements that include many of them, although key elements 1 (inclusive and participatory decision-making) and 3 (equitable distribution of access and costs and benefits) remain largely absent (Figure 5). Integrating these seven key elements into legally binding agreements and certification schemes for all practices is a prerequisite for the future of sustainable use of wild species.

## **7. Conclusion**

Sustainable use of wild species will also require moving beyond the human-nature dualism to a more systemic view of humanity as an integral part of nature (section 1.3.3 in Fromentin et al., 2022). The human-nature dualism is a perception and conceptualization of nature, which tends to separate nature (what exists by itself) from culture (what has been produced by humans). It is deeply embedded in many, but not all, cultures and is pervasive and integrated into many national and international agreements and policies (especially those related to environmental issues). Such a conceptualization is, however, not neutral, as views of the human-nature relationship profoundly influence our perception of the biosphere and the language used to describe, understand, and act on it (Descola, 2005). Importantly, this conceptualization fostered the illusion that humanity could exist apart from or control the rest of nature, to the point that the limitless human use of nature has led to major environmental crises (Plumwood, 2002). The scientific community indeed pointed to this direct responsibility of human activity in climate change (IPCC, 2019b, a), the decline of biodiversity (IPBES, 2019) and the modification of the main natural planetary processes, inaugurating a new and adverse geological era called the Anthropocene (Zalasiewicz et al., 2019). Considering humanity to be part of nature, i.e., one member or citizen of nature among others (Leopold, 1949), would lay the foundation for a more respectful and sustainable relationship, as demonstrated by many indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ traditional values, practices and uses (Brondízio et al., 2021).

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