



environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 1062 {NW1354E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 19 of 2020

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 05 June 2020

Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) Amid the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and the loss of human life and noting that 60% of all human diseases and 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin, how does her department justify allowing the trade in wild animals by 15 local exporters to the risk and detriment of so many others;
- (2) in view of the Republic being the largest exporter of live wild animals to China, how does the Government intend to mitigate against the risk of prosecution in the international courts due to any possible future outbreak in which it was complicit as an exporter of wild animals ?

1062. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

(1) The Department is not aware of the "specific export by 15 local exporters to the risk and detriment of so many others" that is referred to in this question and would need further, more precise information in order to respond comprehensively. South Africa's trade in wildlife is however regulated, firstly, through international conventions that have been ratified by its government. In addition, these multilateral environmental agreements (MEA's) have been "domesticated" in national legislation in the form of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, (Act No. 10 of 2004) and subsidiary

regulations, namely, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Regulations, 2010 and the Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) Regulations, 2008, and the Alien and Invasive Species Regulations (AIS). In addition to the national legislation, each of the nine provincial conservation authorities also promulgated provincial ordinances or Acts which are enforced to regulate the trade in species which are not listed in the national legislation mentioned above.

There is currently no scientific evidence that links South African wildlife trade to any emerging zoonotic disease. Covid 19 is suspected of emerging from the pangolin and bat trade in “wet markets” in China and South Africa does not sanction legal trade in pangolin nor bats. Furthermore, the practice of “wet markets” in South Africa is, our experience, limited if not completely non-existent. More evidence is therefore needed on the risk profile of species and the spread of zoonoses to support evidence-based decision-making. Therefore, the Department has requested the scientific authority to coordinate a team of experts (virologist, researchers and other relevant experts) to monitor new developments and advise of any new developments in this area of zoonotic disease and wildlife trade.

The Department will continue to monitor global developments coordinated by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation on risk assessments for species and develop best practice guidelines for their management in supply chains.

(2) South Africa is a signatory to CITES and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and Migratory species, and is thus obliged to abide by the provisions thereof in terms of section 231 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. In addition, the Country has promulgated domestic legislation which regulates the country's approach to the conservation of ecosystems and species.

Zoonotic disease control is the responsibility of both importing and exporting countries and all export of wildlife and specimen is subjected to veterinary permits issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. Trade will only be allowed when both importing and exporting countries issue veterinary permits which clear the animals from the diseases. Therefore, all exported species will be assessed for disease by the relevant country authorities prior to export being allowed. South Africa's CITES legislation is furthermore regarded as “category A” in terms of CITES compliance with legislative requirements. Category A essentially means that South Africa is fully compliant with

CITES requirements. South Africa will nevertheless continually look at improving its management and enforcement measures to ensure that legal trade is sustainable and not detrimental to survival of species in the wild. In addition, the measures referred to in the response above will also be implemented to ensure that the trade in and export of wild animals is constantly monitored.

Regards



MS B D CREECY, MP

MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 19 | 6 | 2020