



# NATURE NEEDS MORE

THE NEW WAY OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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## **It's time to take a close look at the sustainable fashion strategy**

Sustainability has been described as intuitively understood but having no coherent definition. The implication of this statement is that companies take advantage of consumers lack of awareness about what sustainability truly means and use this to 'greenwash' the company's commitment to sustainable practices. Nowhere could this better describe the case than in the legal trade of endangered species.

The legal trade in endangered species contributes to the mindboggling US\$1.32 trillion value of the luxury market, including in the areas of personal luxury (clothing, accessories, Jewellery, beauty etc), high-end furniture and housewares, fine dining and gourmet food just to name a few. But wildlife and botanicals have managed to slip through the sustainability discourse in luxury industry and this can have devastating consequences.

A 2016 European Parliament Report states: **"The wildlife trade is one of the most lucrative trades in the world. The LEGAL trade into the EU alone is worth EUR 100 billion [US\$112 billion] annually."**; obviously this is significant given Europe is the global centre for the luxury fashion industry.

To ensure that endangered species are not over-exploited by trade they must be factored into the evolving sustainable and ethical fashion strategy. Currently, there appears little interest addressing the plight of endangered species. For example, a UK Government published a report in February 2019 titled **Fixing Fashion Report**. The report on clothing consumption and sustainability correctly states **Fashion: it shouldn't cost the earth**; but it currently does. In a May 2019 **IPBES Report**, the trade in flora and fauna was confirmed as the second biggest threat to species survival. So, it is disappointing that this UK parliamentary report contains only two mentions of the word 'wildlife' (page 9) and only in relation to climate change. There is nothing about the legal supply of wildlife body parts (and endangered species more broadly) to the luxury fashion industry.

A second example is similar and points to the work being done by the **Global Fashion Agenda**. In their 2017 **Pulse Report**, the word 'wildlife' features only once and in the 2018 Pulse Report the word 'wildlife' is not mentioned at all. A second of their publications, the **2018 CEO Agenda** highlights Supply Chain Traceability is top priority. For wildlife (and endangered species) supply chain traceability is impossible until the CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) permit system is upgraded from current 1970s paper based system it is currently, but the retailers using wildlife body parts and botanicals in their production lines haven't made a contribution to upgrading this system in the decade it has been discussed, currently they pay only token amounts for CITES permits.

Nature Needs More's final example, though we do have more, is that of the **Sustainable Apparel Coalition**. This organisation states on its website that it is the apparel, footwear, and textile industry's leading alliance for sustainable production. Behind this statement is its development of its **Higg Index** which it defines as "a suite of tools that enables brands, retailers, and facilities of all sizes — at every stage in their sustainability journey — to accurately measure and score a company or product's sustainability performance. The Higg Index delivers a holistic overview that empowers businesses to make meaningful improvements that protect the well-being of factory workers, local communities, and the environment."

Well not for wildlife and endangered species it doesn't, because there can't be supply chain traceability or transparency until CITES adopts a secure electronic permit system as the basis for trade in flora and fauna. And

given that the Sustainable Apparel Coalition has over 250 members, it is very telling that CITES is not one of them.

In early 2019, Nature Needs More contacted Eva Kruse, CEO of Global Fashion Agenda, about our concern regarding the lack of supply chain transparency for CITES listed species. The response “**you make valid points about the CITES system**” Benjamin Norsworthy, Public Affairs Manager Global Fashion Agenda. **Kruse will speak at the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival Fashion summit on the 13<sup>th</sup> March**, but will she be asked about this issue – Nature Needs More certainly hopes so.

In addition, Nature Needs More has been assured by world-leading experts in trade analytics that the CITES trade database is the worst designed and most impenetrable data source they have ever come across, again highlighting no supply chain transparency.

In summary, when it comes to the global, legal trade in endangered species, we lack any transparent evidence that the sustainable use model is working. While sustainability is touted as the key to future generations of consumers hearts and sustainability teams are set up in global brands to create ‘codes of ethics’ no one actually acknowledges that this proof doesn’t exist for the trade in endangered species.

As stated, the reason for this lack of proof is that the international system managing the trade in endangered species for the luxury sectors and more hasn’t been updated since the 1970s. It is still paper based and may be fairly compared to running a global business, worth hundreds of billion annually, with a black Bakelite telephone and a typewriter. It would only cost US\$30 million to modernise the system that manages the legal trade in endangered species to enable the supply chain transparency the fashion industry keeps saying is a key goal of its sustainable fashion strategy. But none of the global luxury brands making huge profits from endangered species have contributed to US\$30 million needed to modernise the CITES facilitator of global trade.

**Nature Needs More is actively lobbying the 183 CITES signatory parties to push for adoption of electronic permitting by 2022, but this also needs a push from industry.**

When it comes to the legal trade in endangered species, which generates huge profits for some of the biggest brands in the world, the luxury fashion sector is best described as seriously out of vogue rather than a leading innovator.

It is time for the key players in sustainable fashion to incorporate the use of endangered species into their strategies and to start discussions with CITES on how the trade system needs to be modernised to allow traceability. Given the massive scale of the illegal trade and the copious laundering of illegal specimens into legal supply chains, this should be on the radar for all companies using endangered species in their products.

#### **About Nature Needs More**

Nature Needs More Ltd, ABN 85 623 878 428, is a registered charity in Australia with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

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