4.4.1. Principles and operation of Ranching (Alejandro Larriera)

Ranching refers to the removal from the wild of juveniles or eggs, which are then transferred to controlled raising facilities, where they are grown for commercial purposes. It has been the preferred management option for crocodiles in some countries (e.g., Papua New Guinea) since before CITES came into force. Currently, countries such as Australia, Argentina, USA, Zimbabwe and more recently Bolivia and Brazil, are utilizing ranching as a conservation tool for their crocodilian populations.

The 3rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties adopted Resolution Conf. 3.15 on “Ranching”, which provided a specific legal framework for Parties to be able to transfer Appendix-I listed species to Appendix II, if the utilization proposed was largely restricted to ranching and there were clear conservation benefits. Resolution Conf. 3.15 was replaced by Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15). This means that there are two avenues through CITES where ranching can be pursued. First, it can be a standard management option adopted by any Party, for any Appendix-II species, as long as the management satisfies Article IV of the Convention. Second, Appendix-I species can be transferred to Appendix II specifically for the purposes of ranching [Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15)], and largely limited to that form of utilization, in which case additional conditions apply.

Numerous Parties have sought the transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II specifically for ranching. The prerequisites for seeking such a transfer to Appendix II under the ranching resolutions are:

(i) the population of the species is no longer considered to be endangered; and,
(ii) the population’s continued recovery and conservation would benefit from a ranching program.

Many crocodilian species have been transferred to Appendix II through Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15) (see Jenkins et al. 2006). However, changes to Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II meant that ranching proposals, in addition to satisfying Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15), also had to meet the criteria of Annex I of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) for inclusion in Appendix II.

The intent of the ranching resolution, to be able to transfer an Appendix-I population to Appendix II, where that population did not meet the criteria of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) for Appendix-II listing, but where there were clear conservation benefits to the population in doing so, was lost. More recently, the CITES Animals Committee was directed to evaluate the merit of retaining the ability to transfer to Appendix II through the ranching resolution (see CoP16 Doc. 72).