

Further information

The IUCN Sustainable Use Specialist Group (SUSG) is an international network of experts that analyses and compares local use systems in 17 different regions. Operating under the auspices of the Species Survival Commission, SUSG is IUCN's main vehicle for promoting understanding of sustainable use.

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The Species Survival Commission (SSC), an IUCN commission, is a knowledge network of 7,000 members working in almost every country of the world. With 110 specialist groups, SSC assesses the conservation status of species, prioritises conservation actions and provides advice to decision-makers.

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IUCN – The World Conservation Union brings together 79 states, 112 government agencies, 735 NGOs, 35 affiliates and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. Its mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

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Point 7 presents a key aspect of IUCN's Policy Statement. Sustainable use is an important conservation tool because it provides people with incentives in the form of social and economic benefits. Making uses more sustainable means continually improving management as new challenges arise, which is captured by the term 'adaptive management'. This involves monitoring, assessment and applying the results by adjusting management regimes to achieve the desired result.

Point 8 expands on the factors which experience has shown to be vital to enhancing sustainability of uses. Among these are the biological limitations of species and eco-systems, governance structures, whether users have a formal or informal stake in the resources they are using and the removal of perverse incentives. The need to pay attention to demand as well as supply is stressed.

Finally, Point 9 describes an important mechanism IUCN employs to implement its work on sustainable use. This work has now been mainstreamed into IUCN's programme and is no longer pursued as a special initiative. The Sustainable Use Specialist Group remains IUCN's central vehicle for pursuing its mission in this area.

Implementing the Policy Statement

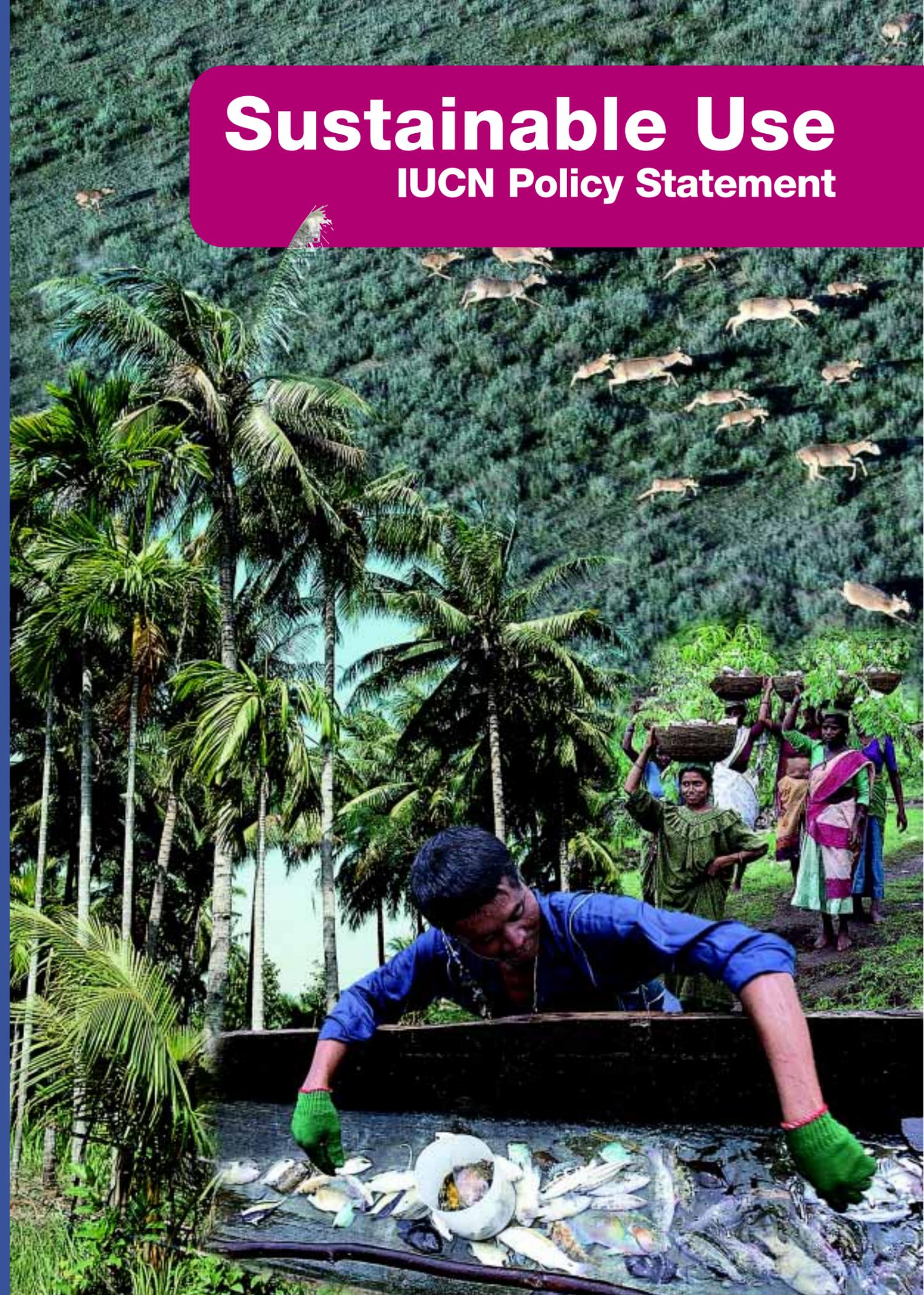
IUCN formally recognised the concept of sustainable use in the *World Conservation Strategy* of 1980, and took it on board as an integral part of its mission statement. Over the years sustainable use has become central to conservation efforts, as the high level of consensus around this policy statement among IUCN's members attests. It is embedded in the IUCN Programme Framework, such that all IUCN activities address sustainable use to varying degrees and in different ways.

For instance, IUCN's biome-based programmes develop tools and guidelines to facilitate the incorporation of sustainable use within ecosystem approaches. The Environmental Law Programme provides analysis of sustainable use issues in policy debates, instruments and legislation and the Biodiversity, Policy and International Agreements Unit has been active in promoting this work in relevant agreements and processes, especially in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Such policy work is also actively pursued at the regional level by IUCN's regional programmes (e.g. the Regional Office for Mesoamerica). The Species Survival Commission, TRAFFIC, and the Wildlife Trade Programme work to identify species threatened by use practices. And the Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy and a number of regional programmes examine implementation of sustainable use via community-based and collaborative natural resource management.

Another important aspect of IUCN's work in sustainable use which is fundamental to IUCN's mission involves exploring the links between sustainable use, human livelihoods, poverty, and equity. This is now emerging as a major, common focus across many of IUCN's programmes and units.

Sustainable Use

IUCN Policy Statement



Sustainable use of wild living resources goes back to the roots of organised human society.

The challenge now is to understand how continued use can be sustainable and contribute both to human livelihoods and conservation of wild living resources.

In modern times IUCN – The World Conservation Union, has been a pioneer in articulating that understanding.



Background

The Union's *World Conservation Strategy*, published in 1980, showed how efforts to conserve nature and natural resources needed to be integrated with a clear understanding of their essential role in human development.

At the IUCN Perth General Assembly in 1990, recommendation 18.24 gave a cautious endorsement to use of wildlife provided that specific guidelines aimed at ensuring sustainability were followed. Subsequently draft guidelines were produced but found to be too complex for practical application and deficient in not giving sufficient weight to social and economic aspects of sustainability.

Following the launch of a regionally-based Sustainable Use Specialist Group (SUSG) within the Species Survival Commission (SSC) in 1995 and the associated Sustainable Use Initiative, the IUCN World Conservation Congress at Montreal in 1996 called for a short policy statement on sustainable use for adoption by the Union at its next Congress.

In producing the first draft the SUSG aimed to provide a condensed synthesis of key elements of sustainable use, based on analytic studies and conforming to IUCN's mission. The text was then considered and amended by the SSC, following which it was sent for comment to all members, Commissions and heads of thematic and regional programmes. A final text (see panel, right), reflecting this truly global consultation, was presented in a motion issued by the IUCN Council to the second World Conservation Congress in Amman in 2000 and adopted, in the context of resolution 2.29, without amendment.

The operative paragraphs of the resolution commend the Policy Statement to IUCN's members, Commissions and Secretariat for implementation within the Overall Programme of IUCN and call on the Secretariat to report progress at the next World Conservation Congress. Making it available in the present format is an important part of that process.

Understanding the IUCN Policy Statement

Most of the Policy Statement speaks for itself. Some of its messages, however, are quite compressed, so it may be useful to expand on them.

The Statement begins by recalling that conservation of biodiversity is central to IUCN's mission which is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. This is the context in which sustainable use of wild living resources is being considered. Use is not being promoted as an end in itself, but the Statement stresses that it is fundamental to the economies, cultures and well-being of people.

The Statement addresses use in its broadest application. This involves consumptive uses through harvesting of animals and plants and non-consumptive uses to maintain cultural and aesthetic values given to biological diversity in different societies. Such application also implies a recognition of the use of wild species as the foundation of domestication and cultivation.

Point 3 restates the message of the *World Conservation Strategy* which establishes use of wild living resources within the sustainable development agenda, supporting human livelihoods while contributing to conservation.

Point 6 presents the key scientific finding that a variety of interacting biological, social, cultural and economic factors ultimately determine whether specific uses are sustainable. There is no simple formula or set of invariable guidelines which should be applied to all uses.



IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources

1. Conservation of biological diversity is central to the mission of IUCN, and accordingly IUCN recommends that decisions of whether to use, or not to use, wild living resources should be consistent with this aim.
2. Both consumptive and non-consumptive use of biological diversity are fundamental to the economies, cultures, and well-being of all nations and peoples.
3. Use, if sustainable, can serve human needs on an ongoing basis while contributing to the conservation of biological diversity.
4. In Recommendation 18.24, adopted by the 18th Session of the General Assembly (Perth 1990), IUCN – The World Conservation Union recognised that “the ethical, wise and sustainable use of some wildlife can provide an alternative or supplementary means of productive land use, and can be consistent with and encourage conservation, where such use is in accordance with appropriate safeguards”.
5. This position was re-affirmed in Recommendation 19.54 at the following session of the Union's General Assembly in 1994 and subsequently in Resolution 1.39 at the 1st Session of the World Conservation Congress in 1996.
6. Analyses of uses of wild living resources in a number of different contexts demonstrate that there are many biological, social, cultural, and economic factors, which combine in a variety of configurations to affect the likelihood that a particular use may be sustainable.
7. On the basis of these analyses, IUCN concludes that:
 - a) Use of wild living resources, if sustainable, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them;
 - b) When using wild living resources, people should seek to minimise losses of biological diversity;
 - c) Enhancing the sustainability of uses of wild living resources involves an ongoing process of improved management of those resources; and
 - d) Such management should be adaptive, incorporating monitoring and the ability to modify management to take account of risk and uncertainty.
8. To increase the likelihood that any use of a wild living resource will be sustainable requires consideration of the following:
 - a) The supply of biological products and ecological services available for use is limited by intrinsic biological characteristics of both species and ecosystems, including productivity, resilience, and stability, which themselves are subject to extrinsic environmental change;
 - b) Institutional structures of management and control require both positive incentives and negative sanctions, good governance, and implementation at an appropriate scale. Such structures should include participation of relevant stake-holders and take account of land tenure, access rights, regulatory systems, traditional knowledge, and customary law;
 - c) Wild living resources have many cultural, ethical, ecological, and economic values, which can provide incentives for conservation. Where an economic value can be attached to a wild living resource, perverse incentives removed, and costs and benefits internalised, favourable conditions can be created for investment in the conservation and the sustainable use of the resource, thus reducing the risk of resource degradation, depletion, and habitat conversion; and
 - d) Levels and fluctuations of demand for wild living resources are affected by a complex array of social, demographic, and economic factors, and are likely to increase in coming years. Thus attention to both demand and supply is necessary to promote sustainability of uses.
9. IUCN is committed to ensuring any uses of wild living resources are equitable and ecologically sustainable, and to this end it has established the Sustainable Use Initiative which incorporates regionally-structured Specialist Groups of the Species Survival Commission to:
 - a) Identify, evaluate, and promote the principles of management that contribute to sustainability and enhanced efficiency in the use of wild living resources; and
 - b) Regularly communicate their findings to members and the broader community.