

## IUCN Principles and Recommendations on Commercial Exploitation of Sea Turtles

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1. Because the majority of the distinct populations of *Chelonia* (green turtles) are extinct, threatened or rapidly declining, the entire group should be considered endangered.
2. The reasons for the extinction and decline of populations include particularly exploitation for meat, hides, eggs and other products (including souvenirs), massive killing of turtles in the trawl nets of fishing fleets as well as increasing habitat destruction and disturbance.
3. The situation has become even more critical with the expansion of international commercial trade in sea turtles and their products.
4. As regards trawling, urgent attention should be given to encourage the use of nets designed to minimize undesirable catches of turtles, and research into this question should be given funding priority.
5. As regards souvenirs, the taking and preparing of turtles and turtle products for the primary purpose of souvenirs should be strongly discouraged.
6. As regards primary exploitation (meat, hides, eggs), where it can be demonstrated that local turtle populations can tolerate exploitation, and the desire or necessity is present, this should be done only by peoples traditionally dependent on them, with methods ensuring minimal waste and for local utilization. The diversion of wild sea turtle resources from traditional use by local people, or the expansion of that use, to satisfy or extend the demands of international commerce, is condemned.
7. It is emphasized at this point that there is a distinction between turtle farming and turtle ranching; a turtle farm implies that the unit is completely independent of wild stocks; a turtle ranch is a unit dependent on wild populations for eggs or turtles with the animals kept in varying degrees of captivity (H. Hirth, *FAO Fisheries Synopsis* No. 85, "Synopsis of Biological Data on the Green Turtle," December 1971).
8. Further, in recognition of the deteriorating energy and food resources of the world, it is advocated that wherever possible any turtle culture be maintained at the lowest applicable trophic level.\*

\* All organisms are classified as producers, primary consumers (herbivores), secondary consumers (carnivores), or decomposers according to the place they occupy in the food chain of an ecosystem. The placement is termed "trophic level." Therefore, herbivorous species should subsist on a diet based on plant protein and carnivorous species on animal protein.

9. Farming objectives which lead to the expansion of existing markets resulting possibly in an increased exploitation of wild turtles are unacceptable. However, it would be consistent with the foregoing principles to accept turtle farming whose products will replace wild turtle products in existing traditional markets. The acceptability of any farm should be demonstrated by suitably designed and independently evaluated tests and data. Moreover, those ranching endeavors satisfying the above conditions and which can be shown not to harm wild turtle populations are also acceptable.
10. Funds should be provided for the preparation of informative pamphlets to promote the application of the foregoing principles and immediate measures should be taken to ensure the early implementation of such action as is necessary to conserve the marine turtle resource in accordance with these principles.
11. Nearly all the considerations stated for *Chelonia* may be applied with equal force to populations of the six other species of marine turtles.