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TITLE: The socio-cultural benefits and costs of the traditional hunting of dugongs*Dugong dugon* and green turtles*Chelonia mydas* in Torres Strait, Australia

AUTHOR: ['Aur lie Delisle', 'Milena Kiatkoski Kim', 'Natalie Stoeckl', 'Felecia Watkin Lui', 'Helene Marsh']

ABSTRACT:

Abstract Signatory states of the Convention on Biological Diversity must 'protect and encourage the customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements'. Thus the management of traditional hunting of wildlife must balance the sustainability of target species with the benefits of hunting to traditional communities. Conservation policies usually define the values associated with wild meats in terms of income and nutrition, neglecting a wide range of social and cultural values that are important to traditional hunting communities. We elicited the community-defined benefits and costs associated with the traditional hunting of dugongs *Dugong dugon* and green turtles *Chelonia mydas* from communities on two islands in Torres Strait, Australia. We then used cognitive mapping and multidimensional scaling to identify separable groups of benefits (cultural services, provisioning services, and individual benefits) and demonstrate that traditional owners consider the cultural services associated with traditional hunting to be significantly more important than the provisioning services. Understanding these cultural values can inform management actions in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity. If communities are unable to hunt, important cultural benefits are foregone. Based on our results, we question the appropriateness of conservation actions focused on prohibiting hunting and providing monetary compensation for the loss of provisioning services only.

SOURCE: Oryx

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