**CITES Trade Database shipment-level guidance**

**Recommended citation:** UNEP-WCMC (Comps.) 2019. Full CITES Trade Database Download. Version 2019.2. CITES Secretariat, Geneva, Switzerland. Compiled by UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge, UK. Available at: trade.cites.org.

**Background**

Under Article VIII of the Convention, Parties are required to provide information regarding their trade in CITES-listed specimens through their annual reports, and the Secretariat makes this information available through the CITES Trade Database (trade.cites.org). This database currently contains over 20 million records of international trade in CITES-listed species. Parties recognise the importance of these reports as a tool for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, assessing the effectiveness of their wildlife management and trade policies, and to enhance the detection of potentially harmful or illicit trade.

At the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee, Parties agreed that a full non-aggregated version of the CITES Trade Database should be made available and updated twice a year. These files represent the periodic release of the CITES trade data in a shipment-by-shipment format with unique identifiers replacing confidential permit numbers (see SC70 Doc 26.2[[1]](#footnote-1) and SC70 Inf. 1[[2]](#footnote-2)) for further background).

**Overview of data**

This zip file contains all trade records (including all historic data) entered in the CITES Trade Database by 29January 2019 and extracted at the shipment level on 30 January 2019. This file is 2019.v2 and replaces version 2019.v1 which contained some formatting anomalies and strengthens security.

While the data provided through the search function on the Web Portal of the CITES Trade Database[[3]](#footnote-3) are aggregated, the database contains non-aggregated data. The data provided in this download is on a *per-shipment basis* i.e. it provides the relevant information about each line item in box 7 to 12 of the CITES permit[[4]](#footnote-4), (in line with Notification No. 2017/006) in a separate row.

Each csv data file contains 500 thousand rows of data, and files are numbered chronologically with the earliest trade records in the files with the lower numbers.

Given their confidential nature, import, export and re-export CITES permit numbers have been replaced with unique identifiers. This ensures that no confidential data are made available, whilst still enabling users of the data to identify instances where the same permit number may have been used for multiple shipments. The method for generating these unique identifiers is detailed below.

Subsequent additions to the database will be extracted twice a year and added as new csv files, which will be detailed with each new release.

**Replacement of the permit number by a unique identifier**

The permit numbers in the download have been replaced with a unique identification number (‘identifier’). This identifier is a ten character alpha/numeric string which is built from a cryptographically secure pseudo-random alpha-numeric string (which is independent of the permit number), which is then hashed via secure, non-reversible cryptographic hash function[[5]](#footnote-5). This process preserves the relationship between exports and re-exports if the Parties have reported corresponding export and re-export permit numbers. Permit numbers always retain the same unique identifier in each release. The same unique identifier is assigned irrespective of whether the permit number is reported as an import, export or re-export permit.

1. <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/70/E-SC70-26-02.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/70/Inf/E-SC70-Inf-01.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://trade.cites.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-12-03-R17.pdf>, Annex 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Secure Hash Algorithm 2, SHA-512 which uses 64-bit words to construct the hash. SHA-512 is specified in document FIPF PUB 180-4, National Institute of Technology (NIST), <http://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/FIPS/NIST.FIPS.180-4.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)