Trophy Hunting in Africa: Facts & Evidence

What is trophy hunting?

Trophies of hunted game are taken as a personal record of a successful hunt. In Africa, it is characterised by high fees for ‘trophy’ species and low off-take volume, as part of a programme administered by a government, community-based organisation, NGO, or other legitimate body.

What is CITES?

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) seeks to regulate international exports and imports in specimens of wild animals, including hunting trophies, at sustainable levels. CITES has currently 180 Parties, including the EU and its Members States.

Why is CITES important for trophy hunting?

CITES provides a legal basis for trophy hunting to take place, recognising the distinction between strictly governed sustainable use and illegal exploitation of wildlife linked to international organised crime. For example, as a result of the conservation benefits to the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) from trophy hunting, CITES allows its trophies to be imported and exported, which is the only trade permitted in this species.

Where hunting has been prevented, species have declined. For example, in Kenya, because of a ban on hunting (and other ways of utilising wildlife for profit), in place since 1977, the country has lost between 60 and 70 per cent of its large wild animals\(^1\). Consequently, demand can only be met through the illegal market, which primarily relies on the killing of rhinos by poachers for their horns\(^2\).

The 2014 ban on trophy hunting in Botswana suggests that a similar increase in poaching is occurring there\(^3\).
Incentive-driven Conservation

For wildlife to survive outside (and even inside) of protected areas in Africa, people must have strong incentives to tolerate, or ideally embrace, wildlife as a land use. Trophy hunting is a major industry in parts of Africa, creating incentives for wildlife conservation over vast areas, which otherwise might be used for alternative and less conservation-friendly land uses. In this context, trophy hunting can bring multiple benefits to wildlife and the communities that live with wildlife.

The potential for trophy hunting to generate important conservation incentives, the conditions under which it is likely to do so, and good practice examples in action, have been highlighted in the IUCN SSC Guiding Principles on Trophy Hunting as a Tool for Creating Conservation Incentives.

Habitat Conservation

Trophy hunting gives large areas of land ‘conservation value’. A minimum of 1.3 million km² is used for trophy hunting in sub-Saharan Africa, which exceeds the area encompassed by national parks. This makes trophy hunting viable across large areas where other activities are not viable, including areas with little infrastructure, relatively low wildlife densities, and political instability.

Economic benefits

Conservation costs money. Trophy hunting produces revenue for protected area management and community conservation. This revenue is estimated to be US$217 million per year in Africa. A simulated ban on trophy hunting in Namibia significantly reduced the number of conservancies that were able to cover their operating costs.

Species Conservation

Most of the hunted individuals (e.g. 96% in South Africa in 2012) are often from more common and abundant species. The authors of recent study entitled “Banning Trophy Hunting Will Exacerbate Biodiversity Loss” argue that where political and governance structures are adequate, trophy hunting can help address the ongoing loss of species. Trophy hunting can also finance reintroductions, for example, black wildebeest (Connochaetes gnou) and southern white rhino (Ceratotherium simum simum) in South Africa.


FACE is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation. Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe’s 7 million hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation. FACE is made up of national hunters’ associations from 35 European countries including the EU-28. FACE is supported by 7 associate members and is based in Brussels.

FACE is the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world, with elections for its statutory bodies taking place every three years. Each country represented within FACE receives one vote.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe.

More at www.face.eu.