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## Mozambique: Court Sentences Chinese Citizen to 14 Years Imprisonment For Crimes Against Wildlife



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**Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique (Maputo)** (<http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/>)

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Maputo — The Inhambane Provincial Court in southern Mozambique has sentenced a 51 year old Chinese citizen, Liu Rong Wu, to 14 years imprisonment, for his involvement in an environmental crime consisting of an attempt to smuggle about nine kilos of dried seahorses out of the country, reports the independent television station STV.

Liu had packed the seahorses, which are legally protected, and intended to ferry them to China where they would be used in the fraudulent racket known as "traditional Chinese medicine".

The court declared that the seahorses were found in his residence, on 19 January. He had purchased them from local fishermen to whom he paid amounts ranging between 30 and 50 meticaïs (four and seven US cents, at current exchange rates) per kilo.

More than half of the seahorses caught were pregnant. Each female can carry up to 1,500 eggs.

The seahorses, the court added, would be traded in Chinese markets at the price of 1,800 US dollars per kilo, and for the nine kilos Liu would pocket between 13,000 to 15,000 dollars.

The court has also fined Liu 250 times the minimum monthly wage in the public administration, which amounts to 1.172 million meticaïs (about 18,300 US dollars), plus 800,000 meticaïs in compensation to the State.

Talking to Facebook, Edmundo Galiza-Matos Junior, the administrator of Vilankulo district, where the crime took place, said he regarded the punishment as lenient.

"It's worth noting that we have Mozambicans jailed in China, and there they do not play around", said Galiza-Matos. "For example, we have a young Mozambican woman in a Chinese prison who was sentenced to death for drug trafficking. She is still alive, because the Mozambican diplomatic authorities, appealed, and her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment".

There are 46 species of seahorse, and many of them endangered - indeed, scientists fear that some species may already be extinct.

Among the causes for the decline in seahorse populations are the deterioration in habitats such as coral reefs and seagrass beds and overfishing for use in Chinese medicines. Seahorses are believed, falsely, to cure impotence and bedwetting, among other ailments.

Liu's defence lawyer has promised to lodge an appeal, and until the appeal is heard, Liu is out on bail.

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