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Meat poaching

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SLOW CONVICTIONS IMPEDE POACHING FIGHT

- 33% conviction rate

"Of the 2 442 suspects arrested since 2015, only 822 (33.7%) had been convicted by 15 May," a report said.

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Since 2015, more than 2 400 suspects have been arrested for the poaching of meat, but these cases have seen a mere 33% conviction rate as the judiciary struggles to finalise the caseload.

Meat poaching cases made up 46% of all the wildlife crimes reported in 2022.

Last year, a total of 430 cases were reported, of which 200 were meat poaching cases.

Meat poaching species are defined as giraffe, buffalo, zebra, antelopes and warthog.

This is according to the Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement in Namibia report for 2022, which said many other animals are, however, also poached for meat - such as birds, reptiles and other mammals.

Huge increase

There has been a huge increase in meat poaching - from the 94 cases reported in 2018 to 265 in 2019.

In 2020, 219 cases were reported, which slightly declined to 209 the next year.

Statistics show that a total of 404 suspects were arrested for poaching meat last year, while 89 suspects were convicted.

"Annual arrests versus the current conviction status indicate that the very high number of arrests has exceeded the ability of the judiciary to finalise cases and convict perpetrators," the report said.

"Of the 2 442 suspects arrested since 2015, only 822 (33.7%) had been convicted by 15 May."

Motives

According to the report, poaching for meat occurs either for subsistence by the rural poor or for commercial gain by criminals, and it is not always easy to differentiate between the two.

“Regardless of the motives, poaching for meat is a massive problem, placing pressure on wildlife populations and on law enforcement and the judiciary dealing with caseloads,” it read.

It added that the market for meat from animals poached in Namibia is almost entirely local, in sharp contrast to markets for high-value specie products located mostly in other countries.

The report further noted that Namibia is in a good position to influence demand to address the meat poaching market