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- TRADE IN ENDEMIC SUCCULENTS IS INCREASING



Namibia hosts diverse endemic succulents. Photo CONSERVATION NAMIBIA

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TRADE IN ENDEMIC SUCCULENTS IS INCREASING

Many suspects arrested

The report points out that forestry legislation and regulations are inadequate and poorly enforced.

Tanya Bause

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Ellanie Smit - Trade in live plants, especially rare and endemic succulents and pachycauls (which includes the custard apple and half-man), has skyrocketed as a growing sector - posing a threat to rare species in Namibia.

According to the report on wildlife protection and law enforcement in Namibia for 2022, the first cases were only filed last year.

However, large quantities of live plants have already been seized and numerous suspects have been arrested.

According to the report, 11 cases were registered last year, with 22 suspects arrested. Two of the people were found guilty. The data only includes arrests related to live plants. Arrests in connection with timber are currently not fully captured in the database.

"Namibia is home to diverse endemic succulents that appear to be particularly popular with international collectors, with the smuggling fueled by internet platforms."

The impact of the illegal trade is currently difficult to quantify - according to the report - but can be serious, especially on rare species with highly restricted growing areas.

According to the report, it is particularly challenging to protect native and endemic succulents that are poached and traded due to a global demand for ornamental plants.

The plants occur at low densities in vast, dry landscapes - often outside protected areas.

"Raising awareness among all stakeholders of the sudden, massive threat posed by the smuggling of live plants is an important first step, while strengthening laws and closer alignment between plant conservation, protection and law enforcement activities is essential.

"It is clear that plant products are harvested illegally and traded in large volumes, which can have a rapid impact on plant populations, especially those of rare species with a localized distribution."

Meanwhile, the illegal exploitation of Namibia's timber resources continues to present significant challenges. Despite a 2018 moratorium on timber harvesting, these illegal operations continue, further depleting Namibia's already limited and severely affected timber resources, as well as some other forest resources.

Cross-border schemes targeting Namibian timber have been uncovered, a number of illegal shipments have been seized, and cases relating to the illegal felling of trees in the charcoal industry have been opened during 2022.

The report points out that forestry legislation and regulations are inadequate and poorly enforced, although the establishment of community forests has been an important development in empowering rural communities to benefit from these resources.

“In addition to illegal logging in the country, Namibia has been identified as a major conduit for both legal and illegal timber shipments from Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Angola to China via Walvis Bay's clearance facilities and the simple truck route from Katima Mulilo. ”

A review of forestry legislation and regulations was undertaken in 2022 and represents the first step towards improving flora laws.

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