



CITES & LIVELIHOODS CASE STUDY 2019

Snowdrop harvesting and trade in Georgia

SPECIES, USE AND TRADE

This snowdrop is native to Georgia, Turkey and the Russian Federation, growing in deciduous forests and human-made habitats such as roadsides, cornfields, and plantations of hazelnut, tea and citrus.

15 million wild bulbs and 3-7 million cultivated bulbs are traded from Georgia each

year for use in horticulture. Based on surveys, this is a precautionary quota.

Rural communities are involved in wild harvest, hired by exporting companies to harvest, pack and transport the bulbs. Some have also registered their agricultural lands as sites of cultivation.

About half the people involved in snowdrop operations are women.

Most of the harvest is initially exported to Turkey, where most drying takes place, then re-exported to the Netherlands for retail packaging. Approx. 30% is exported directly to the Netherlands.



GREEN/GIANT SNOWDROP
Galanthus woronowii



APPENDIX II



NOT ASSESSED

LIVELIHOOD BENEFITS

Snowdrop harvest and trade provides an important source of cash income to hundreds of households of small-scale farmers in poor rural areas, often remote, with very few sources of employment and cash income. People in these areas often have to travel to neighbouring Turkey for seasonal work; for these families, even small amounts of additional income are critical for survival.

The wild trade generates around USD 24 000 annually for approx 200+ harvesters.

Income from cultivated areas is additional to this, and is clearly important to subsistence farmers, who often interplant snowdrop bulbs with agricultural crops to boost their income.

Harvesters do not have the skills to link directly to overseas markets or to do value-adding; they therefore capture only a very small percentage of the final value of the snowdrops. Villagers are paid around GEL 1-1.2 (approx. USD 0.40) for 250 bulbs (USD 1.60 per 1000); exporters sell bulbs for approx. USD 30 per 1000, while the final retail price of bulbs in supermarkets in The Netherlands is around EUR 5 for 5 (or approx. USD 1140 per 1000). This remains, however, highly valued income locally. Middlemen capture a much higher



Photo: Teona Karchava.



IMAGE: Women involved in harvest of snowdrop bulbs. Photo: Richard Wilford.

proportion of the value of the product, but currently fulfil a vital role in enabling the links to markets to be made at all.

Aspects of the national regulatory system have limited the involvement of rural villagers in management and stifled the ability of this trade to contribute to livelihoods of some of Georgia's poorest citizens. The legal system establishes state ownership of wild species, meaning villagers require a licence to access the resource. Villagers cannot afford this licence, so they are purchased

by the middlemen, increasing their control over price and sale.

Livelihood returns are also limited by low capacity of villagers and lack of access to information. Villagers lack contacts with foreign buyers, and lack the skills, training and capacity to carry out further stages of value-adding such as drying, packing, transporting and export.



CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Surveys indicate a roughly stable snowdrop population. Legal, regulated trade has ended chaotic, unmanaged harvest, and ensured stabilization of the population. Exporters, especially long-term traders, have a sense of ownership of the resource and are therefore willing to actively detect and combat illegal harvest. Cultivation ensures a large insurance population in agricultural fields.



Fig 1. Distribution of wild and cultivated populations of *Galanthus woronowii*.

LESSONS LEARNT, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The snowdrop trade from Georgia, is large, sustainable, important for livelihoods of poor rural farmers, and supportive of conservation.

Key to this success has been the extensive support that the Georgia CITES authorities have received from the international

community, to regulate the trade and make sound non-detriment findings .

Livelihoods can be boosted from CITES-list snowdrop trade through encouraging the establishment of more direct trade linkages between harvesters and consumers.



Case study prepared by T Karchava. Edited R Cooney.

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



The presentation of material in this publication does not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area, or concerning the delineation of its frontiers or borders. The views of the author(s) do not necessarily reflect those of the CITES Secretariat; the responsibility for the contents rests exclusively with its author.

www.cites.org



For the full case study see cites.org/eng/prog/livelihoods