

20 TRADE Hub Highlights of 2020

In a year that saw unprecedented global changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the partners and researchers making up the UKRI GCRF TRADE Hub adapted, overcame, and continued to work towards our mission of keeping positive social and environmental outcomes at the heart of global trade systems.

As we face 2021 with renewed determination, reinforced by the urgency of harmonizing the needs of people and the planet now more than ever, *let's look back at some of the TRADE Hub highlights of 2020.*



1

Our year started off well, with the launch of the TRADE Hub in Indonesia.

Two TRADE Hub kick-off events, held in Jakarta and Manokwari (West Papua Province), introduced the TRADE Hub to key stakeholders, in the presence of high-ranking officials. We communicated the findings from our [scoping reports](#) and gained valuable insight and perspectives from participants.



2

Our work contributed to the UK Government's Resource Initiative Taskforce.

The UK's Global Resource Initiative (GRI) published a [report](#) that set out a new strategic approach for the UK to overcome the challenges of commodity-driven deforestation and land conversion. Explicit reference is given to the Trade Hub's contribution on linkages between agri-commodity trade and environmental impacts, including biodiversity, from participants.



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When faced with the significant gaps in knowledge on the impact of COVID-19 on global commodity and wildlife trade systems, we stepped up:

3

Contributions to the UN Environment Programme report on preventing the next pandemic.

TRADE Hub scientists contributed to UNEP's comprehensive [report on zoonotic disease emergence and transmission](#). The report also offers a set of practical recommendations that can help policymakers prevent and respond to future disease outbreaks.



PREVENTING THE NEXT PANDEMIC

Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission



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... and we found innovative ways of carrying out our research work, despite restrictions and lockdowns across the world.

For example, once in-person surveys were no longer a possibility for the Urban Bushmeat Project in the DRC (led by TRADE Hub partners [Wildlife Conservation Society](#) and [ERAIFT](#)), researchers teamed up with Viamo, a company that specialises in mobile phone communications, to carry out anonymized, automated voice calls for data collection. This ensured that research work could carry on unimpeded, despite disruptions caused by COVID-19.

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We shed light on how COVID-19 could disrupt food security of vulnerable populations.

TRADE Hub supported a [webinar](#) on "COVID-19 and what it means for wild meat", led by CIFOR. Among other dimensions, the discussion focused on food insecurity issues that may arise for indigenous or rural communities as a result of banning wild meat consumption.

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A new programme was launched to assess COVID-19's influence on perceptions around wildlife consumption...

We rapidly identified where the TRADE Hub's expertise and research capabilities could [contribute to COVID-19 research](#) needs, and a new programme is now underway (in China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Republic of Congo and the UK), to understand how media and scientific evidence shapes perspectives of wildlife consumption in these geographies.



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Early TRADE Hub research on soy trade impacts in the Brazilian Cerrado featured on BBC's 'Extinction: The Facts', narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

The Facts', narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

[This study](#), the result of a collaboration through the [Trase](#) partnership (which includes the GCRF TRADE Hub), was conceptualized following a consultative process with farming practitioners in the Cerrado. The farmers emphasised the need to have charismatic species be emblematic of ecosystem degradation, in order to better communicate impact. The incorporation of this feedback proved extremely beneficial, because the study was picked up by BBC for a feature in '[Extinction: The Facts](#)', due in part to the emotive nature of the story and the possibility of featuring species such as the Giant Anteater of the Brazilian Cerrado.



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Aligning international trade with environmental legal frameworks was a hot topic, and we were part of the conversation.

the conversation.

A new [report on sustainable resource trade](#) and the role of trade policy therein, developed by the UNEP Global Resource Panel, and UNEP-Environment and Trade Hub was launched by UNEP Executive Director Inger Anderson during the WTO Trade and Environment week. The report revealed that many resource-intensive processes have shifted from high-income importing countries to low-income resource exporting countries, with a corresponding shift in associated environmental burden. The report indicates that appropriate policies are needed to address these adverse impacts of trade and outlines options for policy action at the multilateral and the regional level, in the overall context of a global move towards a circular economy.



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TRADE Hub expertise was called on for the Geneva Trade Week 2020.

We promoted the visibility of the biodiversity and trade nexus at one of the major trade policy events this year, the (virtual) [Geneva Trade Week 2020](#). The UKRI GCRF Trade Hub collaboration organized a session during the Geneva Trade Week, a spin-off of the habitual World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum that was organized by the newly founded Geneva Trade Platform. The session, hosted by one of the Hub's core partner organizations, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in cooperation with UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). On "[Trade, Biodiversity & Natural Resources: What role for Trade Policy in a New Deal for Nature?](#)", highlighted the importance of fostering an integrated approach towards trade, biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources.



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We contributed to organizing key sessions at the World Trade Organization (WTO) "Trade and Environment Week 2020".

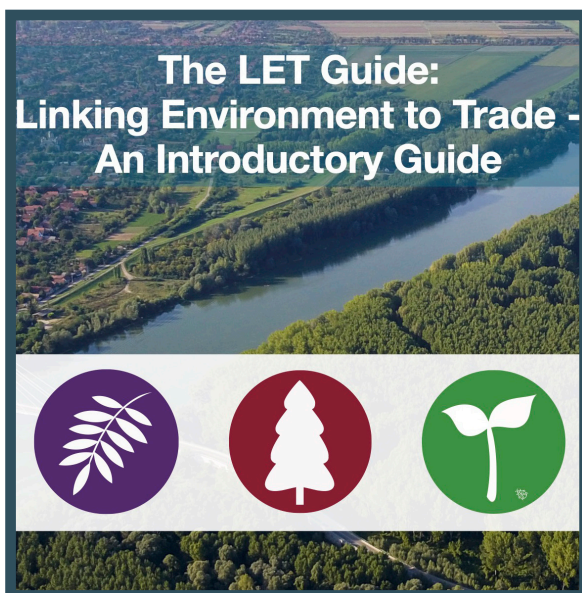
Hub impact partners, UNEP Environment and trade Hub, WWF UK and Chatham House, contributed to the second ever WTO "[Trade and Environment](#)", which took place alongside the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, from 16th to 20th November 2020. The [Week](#) served to explore issues at the forefront of the trade and environment agenda and discuss how to make global trade more sustainable, resilient and inclusive. The forum also provided a platform for the exchange of concrete ideas on the [role of trade and the WTO in building back greener](#) and better from the COVID-19 crisis.



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Our research findings made direct contributions to the UK Government's latest trade guide on 'Linking Environment to Trade'...

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), advisers to the UK government on nature conservation, published a new guide on measuring the impacts of trade on the environment – [the LET \(Linking Environment to Trade\) Guide](#). In producing The LET Guide, JNCC assembled and evaluated information on over 250 initiatives which link consumption to quantified production impacts, building on a list of initiatives provided by the TRADE Hub.



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... and our consultative capacity will continue into 2021.

Members of the TRADE Hub have been closely following activities in the UK which are aiming to improve the sustainability of imports. Earlier this year we contributed to the UK's Global Resource Initiative recommendations, which were recently responded to by the UK Government. Of particular relevance is the announcement that the UK will pursue a regulated [due diligence approach](#) - something that we continue to pursue in terms of how to operationalise - through partners Stockholm Environment Institute – York and the Trase initiative. We also look forward to feeding into the national indicator of overseas trade impact, the development of which will be led by the UK's JNCC over the coming months.

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We launched a series of capacity building workshops in Indonesia, drawing policymakers, academics, NGO representatives, and professionals.

IPB University, which leads capacity building activities in Indonesia, supported by CIFOR and University of Indonesia, conducted its first training 'stakeholder network analysis and qualitative analysis', as a part of the [TRADE Hub Indonesia Training Series](#), which aims to enhance the relevance and promote uptake of research, and support decision-makers at all scales in order to develop and implement relevant policies and regulations more effectively. The virtual training was open to the public and drew over 650 participants over both days.



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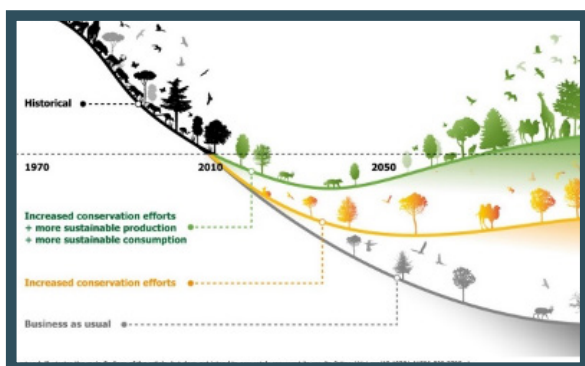
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We were part of world-leading research on halting and reversing biodiversity loss from land-use

change...

TRADE Hub researchers were a part of the landmark “[Bending the Curve](#)” paper, published in the journal Nature. The publication uses futures modelling to identify key actions needed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss from land use change. The findings show that if deployed immediately, bold conservation and restoration action, together with a transformation of consumption systems, could still provide the impetus necessary to reverse declining levels of biodiversity around the world. The work has already fed into key policy and implementation channels, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity’s [Global Biodiversity Outlook 5](#), and the [WWF Living Planet Report 2020](#).



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... and we made sure that these findings were communicated to key decision-makers.

Based on the findings of the “Bending the Curve” paper, TRADE Hub’s Principal Investigator Prof. Neil Burgess spoke to 200 UK government officials on 28 Sep 2020, emphasizing how better trade policy and practices could help the UK reach some of its broader ambitions, while reversing the decline of biodiversity. He also spoke to 40 Danish government and NGO officials using the same material in December 2020.

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Our report ‘Global Soybean Trade: the Geopolitics of a Bean’ recognized the complexities of the soybean

trade.

The story of soybean is a fascinating one, and [our report](#) comprehensively explored the historical trade of soybean, and set out the [burning questions](#) for its future.



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Global Soybean Trade

The Geopolitics of a Bean

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We took steps to understand the private sector's needs when it comes to reducing agricultural trade's impact

on biodiversity.

In Dec 2020, we collaborated with the [Aligning Biodiversity Measures for Business Collaboration](#) and the [EU Business @ Biodiversity Platform](#) to host an online workshop with businesses working on agricultural supply chains. The main objectives were to understand the needs and current barriers faced by these companies when trying to understand and quantify their impacts and dependencies on biodiversity. With over 90 individuals in attendance and a range of stakeholders, it was clear that the interest in better understanding current biodiversity measurement approaches available to these companies is there, with a call for interactive guidance and training on how to implement what is available. The learnings will feed into the development of sector specific guidance by the newly established Align project.



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Our work has also contributed to International policy process within the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Intergovernmental Science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

We have made input to [the indicators under draft Target 4 on sustainable use of species](#), and the draft Target 14 on supply chain sustainability, which is presented in an Information Document for consideration by CBD parties. We have been part of two papers that have looked into the question of the sustainable use of wild species, [one using the IUCN red list of threatened species](#) and the other using the [ZSL Living Planet Index](#). These two papers will be used by the [IPBES Sustainable Use of Wild Species Assessment](#), which will be completed in 2021, and the second paper provides an indicator of sustainable use that is proposed for use within the monitoring framework of the Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention of Biological Diversity.

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Our global research process was on display, and we're only getting started!

We contributed thirteen Hub-led and collaborative [publications](#) to peer-reviewed literature, including expert insight on the implications of COVID-19 on wildlife trade, the social and environmental impacts of palm oil trade, and methods of assessing impact and future scenarios.



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Despite the physical distance, the TRADE Hub research community forged new bonds and we expanded our skills and networks, with regular internal workshops, researcher meetups, and capacity building sessions.

Our TRADE Hub team now includes over 150 researchers across the whole world. We have started to organise monthly researcher meet ups, and there have been numerous within and between work package meetings online due to the COVID pandemic. Training has been provided where necessary and we have all learned new skills in terms of remote working and how to use online tools for communication, meetings, workshops, and surveys. Overall, this new learning has been a positive experience and the skills will stay with us, but we look forward to the possibility of meeting in person in 2021!



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