

LC Paper No. CB(2)871/19-20(05)

From: Sophie Le Clue

Wednesday, 12 February, 2020 07:32PM

Dear Sir Madame,

On behalf of the ADM Capital Foundation, I would like to submit the attached submission regarding the upcoming Panel on Health Services Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Development of Chinese Medicine and Paper LC Paper No. CB(2)521/19-20(01).

I have been trying to upload to the website this pm – but have had some technical issues.

We will not be attending the session to present, but will register as an observer.

We also provide permission for the doc to be made public.

Many thanks

Kind regards

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Comment in the Government's proposal to implement a development framework with increased recurrent resources to develop Chinese Medicine services

We fully support the development of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and its philosophy embracing a harmonious relationship between man and nature. As you are aware, this philosophy is reflected in the most recent edition of the '*Chinese Pharmacopoeia*', wherein the concepts of protecting wildlife and environment and adhering to the sustainable development and promotion of green standards for TCM are stated.

As such, the Government's plans to implement a development framework with increased recurrent resources to develop Chinese Medicine services should embrace sustainable development and in particular should guard against the use of wild animals and endangered species.

Unfortunately, we have not seen any such recognition or dialogue in relation to the use of endangered wildlife in TCM from the Hong Kong Government, despite the Government's endeavours to develop the TCM industry. We appreciate that the Government is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). However, as you may be aware, CITES is an international body concerning trade and does not address policy issues concerning the use of endangered species in the TCM industry, this is the responsibility of Government. It should also be noted that Hong Kong also has responsibilities under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), whereby signatories must '*ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction*'.¹

It cannot be ignored that the endless pursuit of flora and fauna to satisfy the demand from the TCM industry has caused significant damage to global biodiversity. This fact is undisputed by the global scientific community. TCM is a leading driver in the very real threat of extinction facing many species and thus threatening global biodiversity. TCM products that use threatened wildlife include: rhino horn, tiger penis and bone, bear bile, pangolin scale, dried seahorse, elephant ivory powder, leopard bone, lion bone, musk deer, manta and mobula ray gill rakers, saiga antelope horn, reptiles, amphibians and a whole range of other threatened fauna as well as flora. Close to home our own native and critically endangered Golden Coin Turtle is threatened with extinction in a large part due to the use of its lower shell as the main ingredient for Gui Ling Gao.

Particularly during the current virus situation – we must be reminded that consumption of wild animals are considered a potential source of infections new to humans e.g. Ebola, SARS- CoV and recently researchers in Guangzhou, have suggested that Pangolin, the most trafficked animal for food and traditional medicine products, is a possible host for the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), although the precise source of the outbreak has yet to be confirmed.

Of great concern, some Traditional Chinese Medicines that include endangered wildlife as ingredients have only recently been developed and thus should not be regarded as TCM. A

¹ United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992

recent development cannot be described as traditional. An example is the recent use of the African and three Asian pangolin species not previously used in TCM. These species have all but replaced the Chinese Pangolin (the traditional ingredient) which is now functionally extinct across most of its range, primarily because of the unsustainable consumption of its scales in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

As the TCM industry is set to expand, it is concerning that the Hong Kong government is discussing TCM without consideration of biodiversity, ecosystems and the need to develop more sustainable and regulated practices, particularly for the many species now at risk of extinction.

Further, where the sustainability of ingredients is of concern, there is now an important opportunity to demonstrate informed science-based use of alternatives in the industry. With regards to animal use, the 3Rs principle ‘Replacement, Reduction and Refinement’ has been developed to address animal welfare issues and is a widely accepted ethical principle now embedded in the conduct of animal-based science worldwide. These principles should also be adopted for the use of animals in TCM, with the focus on replacement, i.e. alternatives to the use of any animal-based products.

The Hong Kong government’s current approach notably overlooks the key principles of considering the planet’s health and therefore people’s health. Such an approach is contrary to TCM philosophy.

Healthy ecosystems are essential to the continuation of sustainable TCM practices as well as sustainable livelihoods from wildlife tourism, healthy communities and populations across the globe. Presently, discussions tend to focus on the trade and not the underlying principals, biodiversity and the broader health of humanity itself.

We note that in 2018 the government launched *‘a series of activities under the “Promotion of Traditional Chinese Medicine in China – Hong Kong Programme to promote the knowledge and principles of Chinese medicine and its culture. The campaign also aims to enhance understanding of the history and curative effects of Chinese medicine among the general public.’* We urge the Government to take this opportunity to educate TCM practitioners and its users about the sustainable use of ingredients and consumption. Research has identified many alternatives, and Hong Kong should expend resources in this field, refer to international best practice and aspire to be a leader. Failure to educate on sustainability would leave the HKSAR Government open to accusations that it is complicit in the extinction of endangered species.

Turning to events in 2018, we are encouraged by China’s announcement that it will *“postpone after study”* the overturning of its 1993 ban on the trade of rhino horns and tiger parts for medicinal use. Any opening up of legal trade in rhino horn and tiger parts will undoubtedly encourage poaching, trafficking and illegal trade of the world’s last remaining wild populations of rhinos and tigers, and we are grateful that the State Council of China has recognised this.

Indeed, the pangolin trade clearly illustrates that despite a ban on international trade following CITES Appendix I listings in 2016, the continuation of China’s domestic trade has provided a front for laundering a steady flow of scales being smuggled into the country. The volume of scales currently being trafficked into mainland China through Hong Kong is staggering and

represents hundreds of thousands of threatened pangolins. Experts believe that if this trend continues, all pangolin species will become extinct within our lifetime.

Huge pressure is, as a consequence, being placed on source nations aiming to protect their wildlife from transnational organised crime syndicates trafficking endangered species to supply mainland China and Hong Kong's growing demand for TCM.

In conclusion, as the TCM industry expands, we urge the Government to:

- act responsibly by strictly adopting the principles of sustainability;
- adhere to its responsibilities under CBD; and
- support the philosophy that endangered species (from both captive bred facilities and the wild) should not be allowed in TCM and this point should be articulated clearly at all opportunities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Genasci', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Lisa Genasci
CEO
ADM Capital Foundation