



Campaign to ban the sale of “Ejiao” in the United States

The problem: The donkey skin trade for the production of ejiao (donkey skin gelatin) is decimating global donkey populations and harming impoverished global communities.

What is Ejiao? Ejiao is a gelatin created from the skins of donkeys which is used in traditional Chinese medicine, beauty/cosmetic, and other luxury products. Interestingly, the UK has released reports stating that the use of ejiao is unnecessary in the production of these products since the gelatins from other meats, fish, or plants may be used instead.

Background: Millions of donkeys are slaughtered annually for their skins to make “Ejiao”, a gelatin used in Chinese medicine, cosmetics and luxury products. The domestic Chinese and international demand for donkey skins is approximately 8–10 million skins per year but the annual supply in China is less than 1.8 million. This demand has led to the slaughter of massive numbers of donkeys across the globe, decimating donkey populations, most notably in Africa and Latin America. This has had devastating effects on the families who depend on donkeys for survival. A recent report by the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization said that 159,631 donkeys were slaughtered for their skins (8.1% of the population) in 2018. Today, up to 1,000 donkeys a day can be slaughtered in Kenya alone, more than 300,000 a year. The report goes on to suggest that donkeys in Kenya could vanish by 2023. Donkeys are regularly killed illegally and often slaughtered in the bush or street just outside their owners’ property. Moreover, these donkeys are often stolen from families who depend on them for their livelihoods – families already struggling and living below the poverty line.

Demand has exploded over the course of the last decade as the Chinese middle class has expanded. Ejiao products are expensive, but more Chinese can now afford them. As a result, the donkey population in China has collapsed by 76% since 1992. Ejiao companies have set up donkey breeding schemes in China in an attempt to breed the species on a scale sufficient to meet local demand. But due to the long gestation period of donkeys, and the fact that they often only give birth once a year, breeders have not been able to satisfy demand from within China. This is why ejiao companies have turned to Africa and Latin America to satisfy demand for this product.

Here are some key facts about the donkey skin trade:

- Ejiao products have acquired the level of status symbol, going beyond their traditional significance. A government import tariff reduction in 2017, from 5% to 2%, has aided the trade
- The donkey population in China has declined from 11 million in 1992 to 2.6 million today
- The ejiao industry requires 4.8 million skins annually. China can supply only 1.8 million of this total. The shortfall in supply within China has meant that in recent years the industry has turned its attention to other countries with large donkey populations, especially in Africa
- The huge increase in demand has led to massive pressure on donkey populations globally, but also on the communities who rely on them for their livelihoods in lower income countries.
- Donkey theft in these countries is a widespread occurrence, leaving donkey owners bereft.
- Where owners willingly sell their donkeys, they find that within months they are worse off financially than they would have been had they kept their donkeys. As prices constantly rise, it becomes impossible for these owners to go back into the market for a new donkey.
- Welfare conditions for donkeys being taken to slaughter are a huge concern. In many cases up to 20% of those animals transported to slaughter houses arrive dead. Transportation, often over great distances, invariably involves cramped conditions, and no food or water.
- Slaughter practices often verge on the barbaric. Stunning is used inappropriately, and many donkeys suffer greatly at the abattoir.
- A crisis in donkey populations at country level has been met with varied responses from affected countries. Bans in the trade of donkey skins in 7 African countries have been poorly enforced.
- As demand for ejiao continues unabated, donkey populations in lower-income countries continue to nosedive, despite efforts at government level to outlaw the trade.
- **Walmart-owned online retailer Jet.com, eBay, and a number of other U.S.-based companies have already pledged to remove all products containing ejiao.**

The leading importers in the world for ejiao are China and Hong Kong. However, the United States accounts for \$12 million in annual imports each year.

The growing sale of ejiao in the U.S. deepens the crisis affecting donkeys and the communities who rely on them for their livelihoods. The sale and trade of ejiao is completely unsustainable and hugely damaging to poor communities in the Global South. The United States has the power to take a stand and highlight the problems inherent in selling ejiao – from the decimation of global donkey populations to the harm caused to global impoverished communities.

REQUEST OF CONGRESS – It is our hope that the Congress and the Administration will agree to ban the sale of ejiao products in the United States.

In the upcoming Session of Congress – we hope that you will sign onto legislation addressing this issue as a Co-Sponsor in the U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives.

