Notwithstanding the prohibition at national and European Union level to import individual consignments of meat (products), various studies (Chabert et al., 2010; Falk et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2014) report that large quantities of meat, including bushmeat, enter Europe via its international airports without authorization or certification. These studies suggest the existence of an African bushmeat market in Europe.

In order to get an impression of the nature, extent and value of African bushmeat trade in Brussels, 142 travellers waiting at the African departure gates of Brussels Airport were questioned about their travel and import habits. Also, we interviewed 16 Brussels citizens of African descent who frequently travel to Central African countries. In addition, we bought 15 pieces of bushmeat in African grocery shops in Brussels to explore: (i) which species are being sold, (ii) if these are endangered or legally protected, and (iii) the price of bushmeat in Brussels.

The interviews revealed that food from the country of origin is considered superior by the interviewees and that, notwithstanding the (limited) awareness of the rules and policies, the interviewees frequently import African food. The interviews also revealed that apart from the authenticity and flavour arguments, bushmeat trafficking is considered as an easy way to earn money or pay the travel expenses, while the risk of getting caught by customs control is perceived as very low.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 travelling exportates with a balance age (24–53 y.o.) and gender (50% male/female) spread. The participants originated from 9 different countries and were interviewed for approximately two hours in two groups. All interviews were well-versed, living in Belgium or naturalized Belgians having returned to their home countries. A few questions (translated from French) were displayed here to (i) exemplify the importance of the connection to the home country, (ii) to clarify the reasons for bringing food items to Belgium, and (iii) to illustrate the perception of importance and regulations.

Results from a survey interviewing 142 travelers at the departure gates for African destinations at Brussels airport (Belgium). The map shows the departure airport (Brussels) and the African destinations of the interviewees as well as the distribution of nationalities and origins of the interviewees. The figure on the right displays how many of the interviewees indicated to import "jewels", art, bushmeat, fruit, and vegetables, seeds, medications, rice and meat (from wild animals) on occasion when returning to Europe. The right interviewees declaring at sometime "import" meat were of European and African nationalities and/or origins.

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### Identification by COI & CYTB as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Commercial Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potamochoerus spec.</td>
<td>red river hog or bushpig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bos taurus / indicus</td>
<td>domesticated cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragelaphus speki</td>
<td>sitatunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cephalophus spec.</td>
<td>duiker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phantomba monoca</td>
<td>blue duiker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alitherus africanus</td>
<td>African brush-tailed porcupine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thryonomys swinderianus</td>
<td>cane rat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cercoptophilus neglectus</td>
<td>De trozais’s guenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cercoptophilus ascanius</td>
<td>red-tailed monkey/guénons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DNA-based species & using 16S and cytochrome were not used to distinguish among the country of origin, but the individual information given to the vendor; |
* More information given to the vendor is a very important determining factor.

### Motivations for bushmeat import and consumption into Brussels

- **The way they grow food is different in Africa, it’s wild food:**
- **We are proud to share it with our family:**
- **We have to buy, come home, and eat for that reason:**
- **The jungle brings, some rare but I eat it, it’s more quality:**
- **We want to return to its homeland, and get those ingredients:**
- **I want my children to have the real taste:**
- **I want to have the real taste:**
- **My family, it’s something:**
- **It’s a strong command of our parents:**
- **I have to eat it to tell the child:**
- **I have to eat it to make the child:**

### bushmeat was not on display in any of the African grocery stores visited, but after asking specifically for bushmeat, a total of 15 pieces could be purchased from five different shops in Brussels. The meat was sold using local African or common species names and was said to originate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**DNA-based identifications revealed that the 15 bushmeat pieces comprised nine potential mammal species, and that eight of the 15 pieces were sold under a wrong name. None of the nine species are endangered according to the IUCN Red List, but two monkey and two duiker species are CITES-listed. The price of bushmeat in Brussels can reach twice the Belgian market price of a piece of premium livestock meat, up to €62 per kg, but does not seem to be related to the species being sold.**

This study confirms that various kinds of bushmeat, including CITES-listed species, are sold in Brussels. The high prices confirm the luxury status of the product, while DNA-based identifications demonstrate a high incidence of mislabelling. This might be due to the involvement of several intermediate vendors and the fragmented and heavily smoked nature of the meat, making it difficult to identify. Yet, accurate bushmeat species identifications are necessary to assess the hunting pressure on wild animal populations and to implement proper protective measures.

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**References**


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**BopCo**

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