DIFFERENT APPROACHES FOR
RESIDENT HUNTING SYSTEMS WORLDWIDE
ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1. Definition:

Resident hunting is the “harvesting” of game by residents of a country according to the existing legislation. Some countries differentiate (e.g. fees / taxes) between nationals and non-nationals.

Harvesting game by residents without authorisation is called poaching, although in many cases it is accepted as traditional way of life or the consequence of inappropriate legal framework.

2. Introduction / History:

Since the early 19th century most Central Asian and Caucasus Countries have experienced a sharp decline of wildlife species and numbers in general.

- This was, to some extent, due to an increase of human population, forced settlement of nomads, colonisation with foreign people and the growing demand for pasture and arable land.

- Another destructive reason, however, was the replacement of local people’s non formalised traditional hunting regulations by a government run licence hunting system, based on the build up of a powerful governmental body in charge of regulation and law enforcement.

This shift from resource user’s responsibility for wildlife to a central government responsibility did entirely change the “Rules of coexistence” between local people and wildlife.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its rigid law enforcement bodies in the early 90th the inherited license system evolved into a quasi “free access” to everybody system, with “incentive” to “harvest” each reachable head of game before somebody else did it. Short after independence, the wildlife sector of most countries suffered from extremely poor governance, with “institutionalised” bribery replacing license issuing as well as control and law enforcement.

The individual countries governments were thus running out of control of the wildlife management. The “Open Access Dilemma” reached a most critical stage and game was wiped out from most easy accessible areas.

It is actually rather due to the remoteness of some areas and their difficult access then to the existing legal framework and its implementation, that there are still some fragmented populations of large mammals existing in open areas. Although in many countries, only a few licenses for all large mammals were issued the last years end even less licences were used.
Some governments, recognising this dilemma, then tried to face the deterioration of the situation by building up even more restrictive rules and regulations. As a result even more resident hunters were pushed into illegality (poaching), the market for bribery to bypass the complicated legal framework was steamed and control became even less efficient.

**Two Remarques:**

*Beside the evolution of wildlife populations, the evolution of the ratio between legal resident hunters and illegal resident hunters (poachers) is one of the most reliable indicators for the appropriateness of the actual wildlife management system of any country in the world.*

*It is today commonly recognised, that in spite of any form and intensity of governmental regulation and control, at the end of the day, it is rather the “free will” of local people outside in the country, which determines the management of the wildlife sector, and thus assures the survival of species.*

3. **Way-out options:**

3.1. What options do countries dispose to “organise” resident hunting in a way, allowing wildlife to coexist with human civilisation (“What” to do):

**A) General hunting ban for residents:**

Some countries have imposed a total hunting ban for all residents (India, Kenya, the “rayon” of Geneva in Switzerland); some with the argument of conservation of wildlife.

- “Quick” solution
- Communities were deprived of traditional user rights.
- Even the last legal hunter becomes a poacher
- Extreme costly control and repression needed
- Macro economic loss
- Practical results for wildlife conservation are clearly negative
- Initial coexistence problems are not solved

**B) Regional hunting ban / Island solution:**

Governments (all over the world) try to solve the dilemma of non functioning / unsustainable human-wildlife interaction by separation of both on geographically determined sites (national parks / reserves).

- Relatively “quick” solution
- Survival of highly endangered species may be assured in “last minute”
- Concentration of limited available resources (law enforcement)
+ Extremely attractive for foreign donors
+ Potential for economic valuation (non consumptive and consumptive use)
- Communities are deprived of traditional user rights and access to “their” land
- Pressure on remaining open areas increases
- High costs; generally dependant on external assistance
- Initial coexistence problems are not solved

C) License hunting:

License hunting systems for residents are operational in the US, in Switzerland, in most African and most Central Asian Countries.
+ Resident hunting generates income for governments (fees and taxes)
+ Assuming easy access to licenses (as in the US) hunters remain in the legal framework
- Data on number and structures of wildlife populations and their dynamic have to be generated and interpreted as basis for quota setting
- Extremely difficult and costly to control for government agencies in charge
- “Temptation” for bribery to substitute rules and regulations is high
- If licences refer to large areas, there is no incentive for sustainable hunting, social control mechanisms can not work
- Initial coexistence problems are not necessarily solved (common access dilemma !)

It has to be said, that except in some North American States, where governmental bodies steer more or less successful the management of game species under a large scale license system, there are little or no reports worldwide of “classical” license hunting systems proving high performance as management tool.

D) Area based hunting:

Area based hunting systems are characterised by the allocation of hunting rights or even the property of game on geographically defined zones to either:

- Individual or groups of owners of land
- Small social entities of rural people like villages, valleys, (cooperatives)
- Tenants of geographically defined hunting plots

Area based hunting systems impose governments draw back to legal framework setting, leaving decision making and administration of the hunting sector to the hunting right holders and the hunters (users / executers of the rights) at the administrative “ground level”.
“Exclusivity” and “prestige” of hunting are very strong incentives for conservation
Hunting generates income for communities or social entities who rent out their rights
Hunting right holders assure (at least support) the enforcement of law and regulations
All hunters are legal and therefore easy to control
Civil society can impose social control on hunters
Extremely low administration costs
Expensive quota setting is not necessarily needed
Initial coexistence problems are most suitably solved (no common access dilemma exists!)
- Risk of “overstocking” of habitats with game species
- Management of migratory species, conservation needs of non hunting species, predator control and other related issues are sometimes not adequately addressed

E) Mixed hunting systems:

In some former communist countries, in France and some Scandinavian countries, a group/cooperative-license-hunting system exists. It is somehow a mix between a license and an area based system. The hunting rights on large amounts of land do still belong to the government or to regional authorities. Licenses are issued to individual hunters with a validity for a clearly defined area.

Experiences of those systems are varying according to:
- The size of the area of validity of licenses
- The hunting ethic standards of the respective region
- Self control mechanisms of hunters associations

While this system works rather well in Sweden, where a few hunters “harvest” the yield of relatively small areas, it shows a quite poor performance in some places of Italy.

In France, where both, a “rayon”-wide license and an small area based hunting system coexisted for many years, experiences were extremely biased with the later showing game conserving and the first rather game exhausting effects.
3.2. What options do normative bodies of a country A, B or C dispose to implement the political will (rules and regulations) on individual citizens ("How to do it"):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>1 the “classical” one</th>
<th>2 the “intellectual” one</th>
<th>3 the “intelligent” one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method:</td>
<td>Pure law enforcement</td>
<td>Convincing people doing what they should do (but not necessarily want to do)</td>
<td>Policy implementation via incentives (making people do what you want them to do; but feeling that they act on their own will)</td>
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<td>Tools:</td>
<td>Game wardens,</td>
<td>Awareness rising,</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policemen,</td>
<td>Environ. Education,</td>
<td>Discouragement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Training, PR-Campaigns,</td>
<td>Self-control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prisons</td>
<td>etc. “Brain washing”</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Fines and fences”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Can theoretically attain up to 100%</td>
<td>Variable between low and mediocre</td>
<td>Can theoretically attain up to 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Increase progressively in line with the efficiency until endless</td>
<td>High in the beginning, lower if running</td>
<td>Extremely low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Inconvenient for both parties</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4. Lessons learned and recommendations:

The major problems of „classical“ resident license hunting systems are:

- Bureaucracy and consequently corruption pushing hunters into illegality
- Extremely high costs for monitoring and law enforcement
- Little acceptance by local communities
- No or little benefit sharing
- Exclusion of users and civil society in decision making and management

Those „classical“ hunting systems tend to provide thus a strong incentive for legal and illegal hunters to harvest game on a “first-come first-served” mode. The dilemma of the commons!

Reform of the system is needed and in many countries already underway or at least planned.

Any alternative systems have pros and cons and political decision makers have to consider the specific situation of a country when deciding for the most appropriate system.
It is however quite obvious, that any resident hunting systems, trying to assure sustainability of wildlife management via massif enforcement of rigid rules and regulations, have little or no chance for being successful.

The development of new resident hunting systems should respect the following principles:

1. Transfer of **rights for the use of wildlife** from the government to the people who live on and from the land (not necessarily the owners of the land). Whether this are villages or individual people or any other small social entities.

2. Authorisation of free **choice of any legal wildlife exploitation mode** for hunting right holders (organised subsistence hunting, renting out to residents, tourist hunting, whatever).

3. Transfer of a maximum of **decision making competence** to a) the legal users of wildlife (hunters), b) the hunting right holders and c) the civil society of the region. E.g. definition of harvesting rates, restricted hunting periods and zones, number of hunters, performance monitoring, pos. and neg. sanctions, self control mechanisms and discipline (associations).

4. Transfer of a maximum of **responsibility for the management of wildlife** of clearly defined zones to the authorised users (legal hunters); within the defined frame of the law and the jointly (with the hunting right holders) agreed objectives.

5. Draw back of governmental authorities on “core tasks” as for example the definition of the overall legal framework. E.g. minimum requirements for hunter’s knowledge and skills (proficiency test), development of minimum standards for hunting rules and regulations, assuring the compatibility with international agreements, assuring transparency, interface between conservation and hunting and prosecution of infractions.

Any reform of the actual hunting system has to aim the introduction of powerful incentives for resource users to undertake efforts to increase, conserve and sustainable manage game populations and improve on habitats of wildlife on their own motivation and for their own benefit. With no governmental action needed except for the design of the appropriate legal framework.