SHARK ALLIANCE

EU Shark Conservation

Recent Progress and Priorities for Action

Species in the Spotlight

European fishermen have a long history of catching a wide variety of sharks and rays. Some beleaguered species finally have EU protection while others are the subject of new, unregulated fisheries. Here we profile some of Europe's most heavily fished species.

Spiny dogfish or 'Spurdog'
Squalus acanthias

A slender, white-spotted shark that grows to about 1 metre in length and travels in schools. Can live for many decades; remains pregnant for nearly two years.

FOUND: Cool, coastal waters worldwide.
DEMAND: Smoked belly flaps popular in Germany. Sold as 'rock salmon' in UK fish and chips shops. Fins not considered high quality but still traded internationally.
STATUS: *Critically Endangered* in the Northeast Atlantic; *Endangered* in the Mediterranean Sea; Vulnerable in the Black Sea and globally.
FISHING LIMITS: Excessive EU commercial fishing quotas finally set at zero, starting in 2011.

Porbeagle shark
Lamna nasus

A powerful, torpedo-shaped, highly migratory shark closely related to great white sharks.

FOUND: Cool waters in both hemispheres, including offshore in northern Europe.
DEMAND: Fins valuable and sold to Asia while sought primarily for meat.
STATUS: *Critically Endangered* in the Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea; *Vulnerable* globally.
FISHING LIMITS: EU commercial catch unregulated until 2008; reduced to zero from 2010.

Shortfin mako shark
Isurus oxyrinchus

This wide-ranging shark, thought to be the world's fastest, cannot out-swim today's vast fishing fleets.

FOUND: Open-ocean waters around the world, including the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.
DEMAND: Among the most highly sought of EU shark species, particularly by Spanish high seas longline fishermen. Both fins and meat are valuable.
STATUS: *Critically Endangered* in the Mediterranean Sea; *Vulnerable* in the northeast Atlantic.
FISHING LIMITS: None for EU waters or vessels.

Angel shark
Squatina squatina

This flattened species resembles skate and rays and can bury itself in sand to hide from predators.

FOUND: Once common in coastal waters of the Northeast Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Sea; now rare and locally extinct in the North Sea and northern Mediterranean.
DEMAND: Seriously depleted, despite its low value, due to incidental catch, particularly in trawls.
STATUS: *Critically Endangered* throughout European waters; *Vulnerable* globally.
FISHING LIMITS: EU prohibition on retention agreed in 2008, to start in 2009.

Starry smoothhound
Mustelus asterias

A small, white-spotted shark that feeds primarily on crustaceans and was recently found to grow much more slowly than previously thought.

FOUND: Relatively shallow waters of the northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea.
DEMAND: Increasingly sought after by fishermen off Atlantic continental Europe, primarily for meat.
STATUS: Still officially listed by IUCN as *Least Concern*, but new studies report overfishing causing disappearance from much of former range, particularly in Southern Europe.
FISHING LIMITS: None for EU waters or vessels.

Deep-sea gulper shark
Centrophorus granulosus

A small, dark-brown shark with glowing, green eyes. Thought to give birth to just one pup every two to three years.

FOUND: The deep ocean, between 200 and 1,200 metres below the surface.
DEMAND: Severely overfished off Europe for meat and the rich oil from their livers.
STATUS: *Critically Endangered* off Europe (particularly Portugal); *Vulnerable* globally.
FISHING LIMITS: EU quotas reduced biennially since 2005, set to go to zero in 2012.

Blue shark
Prionace glauca

This sleek, brilliant-blue shark is known to cross entire ocean basins.

FOUND: Open ocean including the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, from Norway to South Africa.
DEMAND: Dominant species in Asian fin trade due more to high volume of catches rather than exceptionally high value. Increasingly sought due to growing markets for meat.
STATUS: *Near Threatened* globally.
FISHING LIMITS: None for EU waters or vessels.

COVER PHOTO: ANDY MURCH

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A changing profile

The European Union (EU) remains a global shark fishing power, but its record on shark conservation is changing. The EU's notorious not-so-distant past – characterised by severe population depletion, unregulated fishing and exceptionally weak regulations – is now finally being balanced by recent, significant strides toward limiting EU shark fisheries and securing international protections for the most vulnerable shark species. Long-time pioneers in developing markets for sharks, EU Member States are now also taking a leadership role in applying international wildlife treaties to sharks.

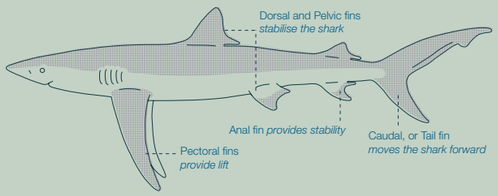
The 2009 EU Shark Action Plan was long overdue, but has set the stage for sweeping improvements in shark policies. The fate of shark populations off Europe and all over the globe hangs in the balance as the EU faces its next big challenge: cooperative, prompt and full implementation of the Shark Action Plan, starting with closing the loopholes in the EU ban on finning, enforcing science-based limits on shark fisheries before populations collapse, and providing special protections for endangered shark species.

These changes are urgently needed to ensure the sustainability of European shark populations and fisheries over the long term. Given the EU's influence on international fisheries policies and developing countries, such improvements are also critical for securing a brighter future for sharks around the world.

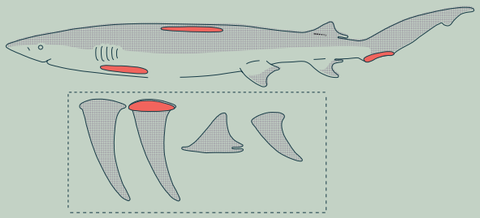
Ensuring the Success of the EU Plan of Action for the Conservation of Sharks

Shark Fins & Techniques to Enforce Finning Bans

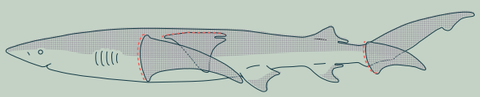
Finning is the practice of slicing off a shark's valuable fins and discarding the body at sea.



Different types of shark fins
Sharks have five types of fins which they use for stabilisation, steering, lift and propulsion.



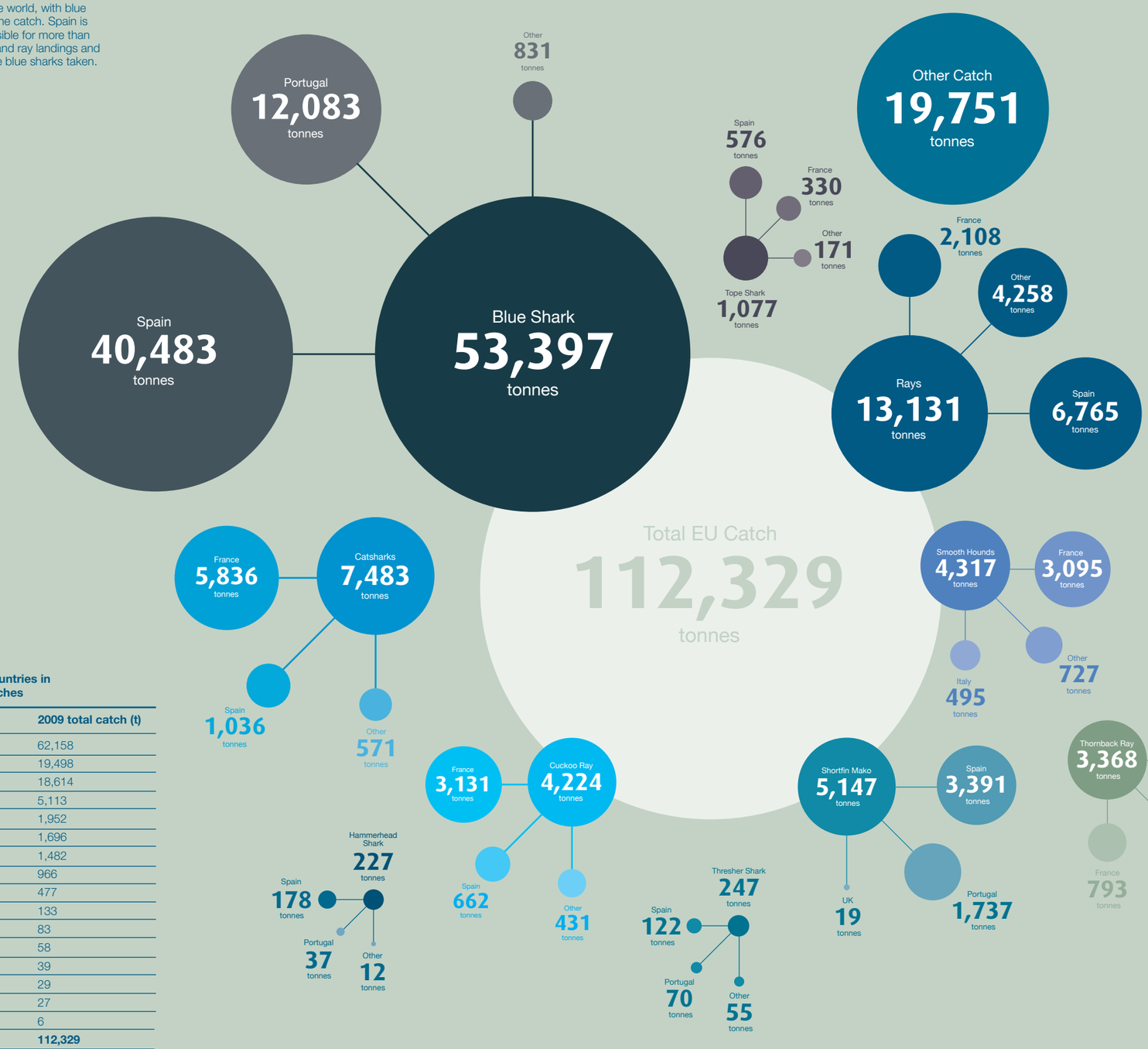
Primary fin set value
1kg of dried shark fin can fetch up to 500 Euros
1 bowl of shark fin soup can cost more than 90 Euros



Fins naturally attached
Landing sharks with their fins attached but cut in such a way as to not sever the fin is the best way to close loopholes and end finning

Who catches what

In 2009, according to FAO, EU vessels landed 112,329 tonnes of sharks and rays from around the world, with blue sharks dominating the catch. Spain is consistently responsible for more than half of all EU shark and ray landings and three-quarters of the blue sharks taken.



Ranking of EU Countries in shark and ray catches

	2009 total catch (t)
Spain	62,158
France	19,498
Portugal	18,614
UK	5,113
Belgium	1,952
Italy	1,696
Ireland	1,482
Greece	966
The Netherlands	477
Denmark	133
Sweden	83
Bulgaria	58
Malta	39
Estonia	29
Germany	27
Slovenia	6
European Union	**112,329**

Sharks: Valuable yet Vulnerable
The life history characteristics of most sharks (slow growth, late maturity, small number of young) make them particularly susceptible to overfishing and slow to recover once depleted. Because most sharks play key roles as top ocean predators, shark overfishing can cause disruption and imbalance in marine ecosystems.

Roughly one-third of all European shark populations assessed are classified as Threatened under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Another 20 percent are at risk of becoming Threatened in the near future while data are insufficient to assess the status of the rest. European sharks categorised by the IUCN as Threatened include spurdog, porbeagle, angel, basking, shortfin mako and smooth hammerhead sharks, and several species of deep-sea sharks, skates and rays.

European fishermen have long sought sharks for their meat, fins, liver oil and leather. Today, a wide variety of cartilaginous fish (sharks, rays, and chimaeras) are taken incidentally in most European fisheries and increasingly targeted due to new market demand.

Bycatch
Bycatch, the incidental capture of non-target species, is a serious problem for sharks and rays in most EU fisheries. The level of bycatch depends on the type of fishing gear as well as where and how it is used. European angel sharks and common skates have become Critically Endangered due mainly to bycatch in unselective bottom trawls. Blue sharks have long made up a large percentage of the bycatch in EU pelagic longline fisheries for tuna and swordfish, but are now increasingly targeted. With changing markets and regulations, the lines between truly unwanted bycatch, secondary (incidental yet welcome and marketed) catch, and the targets of mixed-species fisheries are often blurred. Sharks and rays, in particular, have often been labeled by fishermen and managers as "just a bycatch" and, as a result, have had their conservation needs downplayed and overlooked.

European Shark and Ray Fishing
According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) catch statistics, Spain, France, Portugal, and the United Kingdom (UK) rank among the top 20 'shark' (term also includes rays and chimaeras) fishing countries, putting the EU second in the world for landings of these species. Spain ranks third overall with 7.3 percent of the total global shark catch, while France, Portugal and the UK come in 12th, 16th and 19th, respectively.

Spanish and Portuguese longliners venture far into the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans for oceanic sharks which they take and often target along with tuna and swordfish. Shark catch from these vessels is typically 80 percent blue sharks and 10 percent shortfin mako, but oceanic whitetip, silky, thresher, hammerhead, and porbeagle sharks are also taken.

Whereas there are a few French and UK vessels taking sharks on the high seas, the 'shark' catches for France and the UK are currently mostly made up of smaller, coastal shark species (such as catsharks and smoothhounds) as well as many types of skates and rays, taken primarily with trawls for their meat. France was the most recent, main participant in a now-closed fishery for porbeagle. The UK was the main player in the fishery that devastated the Northeast Atlantic spiny dogfish or 'spurdog'. Europe's exceptionally slow-growing deep-sea sharks, such as Portuguese dogfish and gulper sharks, have been essentially mined for their meat and liver oil, mainly by fishermen from France, Spain, UK, and Portugal using deep gillnets and longlines.

Denmark has a history in the porbeagle shark fishery, while Ireland took relatively large shares of the EU spurdog and deep-sea shark quotas when they were available. Irish and Belgian vessels land substantial amounts of skates and rays.

EU Shark Conservation Action to Date
The EU has made significant progress towards shark conservation since 2006, but there is still much important unfinished business. On one hand, the EU has shut down several unsustainable shark fisheries, established new quotas for many shark and ray species; fully protected several Threatened species; and championed numerous shark measures under international fisheries and wildlife treaties. On the other hand, closures were enacted only after populations essentially collapsed; there are still no limits in place for the main targets of EU shark fisheries (blue and mako sharks); endangered species (such as hammerheads and giant devil rays) are woefully under-protected; and the EU Finning Regulation still has huge loopholes that make it possible to fin sharks without detection or punishment.

Shark and Ray Meat
Europe is the source of a persistent demand for spurdog meat that fuels intense fisheries around the world. Spurdog meat is sold for fish and chips in the UK and as smoked belly flaps in Germany, while fillets are eaten in other EU countries including Belgium, France and Italy. Because the largest animals fetch the best price, spurdog fisheries often target aggregations of pregnant females, resulting in serious damage to the reproductive capacity of populations.

Europe has also been a major market for meat from porbeagle sharks and a variety of rays, particularly for US and Canadian fishermen. This demand may well be driving trade from other regions, but data are lacking. Italy is among the top importers of shark meat in the world, recently responsible for more than 10 percent of global imports (primarily blue shark, dogfish, porbeagle, smoothhound, catshark and mako meat).

Shark Fins
Shark fins are the critical ingredient in shark fin soup, a traditional, celebratory Chinese dish. With a rise in demand since the 1980s, shark fins are now among the world's most valuable fisheries products. In Hong Kong, processed fins can sell for hundreds of Euros per kilogramme. The high-value fin, in contrast to typically lower-value shark meat, creates the economic incentive for shark 'finning' - the wasteful practice of slicing off a shark's fins and discarding its body at sea. The EU, particularly Spain, is one of the world's largest suppliers of shark fins to East Asia.

The Road to Recovery
More than a decade ago, in response to growing concern over depletion of the world's shark populations, governments of the United Nations adopted the FAO International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, and pledged to produce shark conservation plans for their waters and fishing regions by 2001.

Since its formation in 2006, the Shark Alliance has been highlighting – for European citizens and policy-makers – the urgent need to better protect sharks. In February 2009, the European Commission released the long-awaited 'European Community Action Plan for the Conservation and Management of Sharks' (the EU Shark Action Plan). The Plan set forth measures aimed at improving information on shark fisheries, biology and trade, stopping overfishing, and preventing finning.

The EU Shark Action Plan was endorsed by the European Fisheries Council in April 2009, setting the stage for sweeping improvements in EU shark fishing and protection policies. The EU can emerge from this process as a leader in shark conservation by focusing on and ensuring implementation of the Plan's commitments to:

- **strengthen the EU Finning Regulation;**
- **set science-based, precautionary catch limits for sharks;**
- **provide special protections for Endangered shark species; and**
- **propose complementary measures for sharks at international fora.**

80%

Blue sharks make up 80% of the shark catches taken by Spanish and Portuguese longliners all over the world. Yet, there are no EU or international limits on blue sharks.

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Strengthening the EU Finning Ban

The Issue

Shark 'finning' is the practice of cutting off a shark's fins and discarding the rest of the carcass back into the sea. The incentive to 'fin' sharks stems from the discrepancy in value between shark fins and meat. Finning results in the discard of roughly 95 percent of the targeted animal, which includes potential sources of protein and, as such, is widely acknowledged to be an irresponsible and wasteful practice. Since the early 1990s, finning has been banned by roughly 30 countries and the EU. Most international fisheries bodies banned finning in 2004 and 2005.

The EU finning ban was finalised in 2003 with Regulation (EC) 1185/2003, but loopholes undermine its effectiveness and set a poor standard for other countries and international policies. Indeed, the EU finning ban is among the most lenient in the world. Specifically, whereas the Finning Regulation generally prohibits shark fin removal on-board fishing vessels, Article 4 allows for derogations through "special fishing permits" granted by Member States. Permitted fishermen can remove shark fins; a fin-to-carcass weight ratio limit is used to judge whether fins and bodies landed are in the appropriate proportion.

The EU fin to carcass ratio is set at 5 percent of the shark's whole (theoretical) weight. This is impossible to measure accurately as the shark is no longer whole during such an inspection. In addition, this ratio is about twice as high as the weight ratio used in Canada and the US (which is 5 percent of a shark's *dressed* weight i.e. after its head and guts are removed). According to the IUCN, fishermen could fin an estimated two to three sharks for each one landed and not exceed this high ratio limit. To make matters worse, permitted fishermen are allowed to land fins and carcasses at different times, in different ports. Special fishing permits were meant to be the exception and yet they have become the rule, with Spain and Portugal issuing them to most of their pelagic shark-fishing vessels.

Prohibiting at-sea removal of shark fins, and thereby requiring that all sharks be landed with their fins *naturally* attached, is the simplest, most reliable and cost-effective means of implementing a finning ban. This strategy also allows for improved, species-specific landings data, which are essential for population assessment and fisheries management. To facilitate efficient storage, fins can be partially cut and laid along the sharks' bodies. The 'fins naturally attached' method has the support of the vast majority of conservationists, scientists, and enforcement personnel.

Commitments

In February 2009, as part of the EU Shark Action Plan, the European Commission pledged to strengthen the EU Finning Regulation. In April 2009, the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers endorsed the Shark Action Plan and encouraged the Commission to pay special attention to and prioritise shark finning issues.

Progress since 2006

In late 2006, the European Parliament urged the European Commission to tighten the EU Finning Regulation. Options for amending the Regulation were laid out by the European Commission and debated by stakeholders in 2007 and 2008 as part of the public consultation on the EU Shark Action Plan.

Since 2007, the EU has supported annual Sustainable Fisheries Resolutions from the United Nations General Assembly encouraging States to consider requirements that all sharks be landed with fins naturally attached. In 2008, the IUCN World Conservation Congress adopted a global policy on finning that amounts to a call on States to ban at-sea removal of shark fins.

In September 2010, four Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), with the support of the Shark Alliance, launched a Written Declaration calling on the European Commission to deliver a proposal to prohibit the removal of shark fins on-board vessels. Signed by a majority of MEPs, the Written Declaration was endorsed as a Resolution of the Parliament in December 2010.

In November 2010, the European Commission initiated a public consultation on options for amending the EU Finning Regulation, including a ban on at-sea fin removal. Comments were accepted through February 2011 and reflected strong support for the 'fins naturally attached' option from conservationists, scientists, divers, aquarists, and concerned citizens.

The European Commission is expected to release its proposal for a revised EU Finning Regulation for consideration by the European Parliament and Council of Fisheries Ministers during the last few months of 2011. Growing momentum – internationally and within the EU – for a simpler and more reliable policy gives hope that the Commission will propose a complete ban on the removal of shark fins at sea, in line with the Shark Alliance position. The process for debate and possible amendment of this proposal will continue well into 2012. The final Finning Regulation is expected to be adopted in late 2012.

Recommendations

The Shark Alliance is calling on Fisheries Ministers and Members of the European Parliament to press for a complete ban on at-sea shark fin removal (all sharks landed must have their fins naturally attached), while stressing that this new rule should have no exceptions.

Limiting EU Shark Catch

The Issue

Under the current EU Common Fisheries Policy, catch limits for fishermen, in the form of total allowable catches (TACs) or full prohibitions on retention, are proposed by the European Commission and agreed by the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers. All commercially important fish are supposed to be managed and all depleted species are meant to have recovery plans. EU fishery managers are provided with scientific advice based on the work of scientists from the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Catch limits are set annually for most fish populations and every two years for deep-sea species.

The EU is gradually protecting more threatened shark and ray species and bringing more shark and ray species under quotas. These regulations, however, have come late and do not all cover the full ranges of threatened species. Much EU shark fishing remains unregulated.

Commitments

Through the EU Shark Action Plan, and in more general commitments, the European Commission has pledged to end overfishing of sharks and set fishing limits in a more precautionary manner, based on scientific advice. The Plan, which has been endorsed by the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers, also calls for bycatch reduction and fishing limits to protect endangered species.

Progress since 2006

In December 2006, the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers rejected a proposal from the European Commission to limit catch of porbeagle sharks at 240 tonnes (t) and left the fishery unregulated. Ministers agreed, however, to reduce the TAC for spurdog in the North Sea by 20 percent and established another spurdog TAC (2,828t) for other parts of the northeast Atlantic, starting in 2007. These measures fell far short of the ICES advice for no fishing on either species.

In late 2006, the EU Fisheries Council also prohibited the fishing, retaining, transshipping and landing of basking and white sharks, following their listing under the Convention on Migratory Species.

The first reductions in TACs for exceptionally vulnerable deep-sea sharks came into effect in January 2007, in line with a previous EU Fisheries Council agreement to phase out fishing of these species.

In December 2007, the Fisheries Council set the first EU TAC for Atlantic porbeagle sharks at 581t (substantially higher than the 422t proposed by the Commission) for 2008. Ministers also reduced the 2008 TACs for Atlantic spurdog, skates, and rays by 25 percent, as proposed by the Commission.

The Council further reduced the deep-sea shark TAC in November 2008.

In December 2008, the EU Fisheries Council failed to heed Commission advice to close porbeagle and spurdog fisheries and instead reduced TACs by 25 percent and 50 percent, respectively. Ministers balanced this reckless decision with agreements to ban retention and mandate careful release of common skates, angel sharks, undulate rays, and white skates, starting in 2009.

In December 2009, the Fisheries Council agreed both to end fishing for porbeagle sharks in the Atlantic through a zero TAC and to effect a ban on EU vessels taking the species from international waters. Ministers also reduced spurdog fishing quotas by 90 percent, starting in 2010.

In November 2010, the Council adopted a Commission proposal to add four species to the deep-sea shark fishery closure (frilled shark, six-gill shark, sailfin roughshark and knifetooth dogfish) and finally set the deep-sea shark TAC at zero, starting in 2012.

In December 2010, the Council followed through on a commitment to set the spurdog TAC at zero, maintained the porbeagle fishery closure for 2011, reduced quotas for skates and rays, limited longline fishing for tope sharks, and protected Atlantic (but not Mediterranean) guitarfish.

In August 2011, the European Commission proposed extending the porbeagle measures to all EU waters, including those in the Mediterranean.

Recommendations

The Shark Alliance is calling on the European Commission to propose and the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers to support:

- continuation of current protections for porbeagle, spurdog, and deep-sea sharks;
- comprehensive recovery plans for these species;
- continuation of existing prohibitions on retaining basking sharks, white sharks, angel sharks, common skates, white skates, and undulate rays;
- new EU water and vessel prohibitions on retention and sale of all unprotected EU shark and ray species listed by the IUCN as Endangered and Critically Endangered, including great and scalloped hammerhead sharks, sawback and smoothback angel sharks, Maltese skates, giant devil rays, and sawfishes;
- inclusion of the exceptionally vulnerable lowfin gulper shark under EU deep-sea shark measures;
- new EU TACs for increasingly targeted blue sharks, shortfin makos, smoothhounds, catsharks, and chimaeras;
- extension of existing EU shark and ray measures to include all EU waters of the species' ranges, including the Mediterranean;
- extension of international protections adopted through Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) for oceanic whitetip and thresher sharks to all EU waters and all EU vessels.

EU Member State Actions

EU Member States are obliged to implement applicable EU fishing regulations, including shark catch limits, on a national basis. In many cases, enforcement is lacking; at the same time, a few Member States have taken some extra steps for sharks.

The UK began championing national and international protection for basking sharks in the late 1990s and has since led the EU in the protection of angel sharks and limits on tope. Malta became the first Mediterranean country to legally protect basking and great white sharks as well as giant devil rays in 1999. Sweden has specifically prohibited fishing for porbeagles, small-spotted catsharks, and thornback rays, as well as common skates and basking sharks since 2004, and spiny dogfish since 2011.

In 2009, Spain became the first (and - to date - the only) EU Member State to ban fishing for all species of thresher and hammerhead sharks and began promoting such protections globally through the EU. In February 2011, Spain prohibited all capture, injury, and trade of these species as well as giant devil rays, basking sharks, and white sharks.

The Shark Alliance has documented numerous cases of the most obvious EU shark conservation violation – landing a basking shark – in Belgium, Greece, and Spain. In 2011, a porbeagle shark caught in the North Sea was landed and sold in the Netherlands, despite an EU ban on catches.

Through its European network, the Shark Alliance urges EU Member States to:

- educate fishermen on existing shark and ray conservation status;
- strictly enforce all EU shark and ray fishing regulations; and
- ensure full national protection for all shark and ray species listed by the IUCN as Endangered or Critically Endangered.

Promoting International Shark Conservation

The Issue

The EU is an active member and powerful influence at the world's international fisheries and wildlife conservation bodies. Many sharks migrate over political boundaries and are traded internationally. Consistent safeguards throughout species' ranges are essential to effective conservation.

Commitments

Through the EU Shark Action Plan, the European Commission and the Council have committed to promoting EU-compatible shark fishing restrictions at the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), and to using the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to control shark fishing and trade.

Progress since 2006

The EU has played a role in securing general bans on directed shark fisheries through the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, the South East Fisheries Organisation, and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

Germany has long championed the listing of spurdog and porbeagle sharks under CITES Appendix II, which would improve monitoring and possibly restrict trade in these commercially valuable species. The EU proposed these listings at the 2007 Conference of the Parties to CITES in the Hague. Both proposals received support from more than half the CITES Parties but failed to reach the two-thirds majority required for adoption. The EU did support the successful listing of all but one sawfish species under CITES Appendix I, which effectively banned commercial trade.

In November 2007, at the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the EU and other Parties agreed to reduce fishing on North Atlantic mako and porbeagle sharks. At the 2008 annual ICCAT meeting, the EU unsuccessfully proposed international catch limits for mako and blue sharks as well as full protection for hammerhead and thresher sharks.

At the December 2008 Conference of the Parties to CMS, Belgian-led proposals to list spurdog and porbeagle were successful. The listings signaled Parties' commitment to regional cooperation to conserve the species, but are not associated with concrete requirements to do so. The European Commission and several EU Member States were also active in an associated CMS meeting for development of an international agreement on migratory sharks.

At the September 2009 annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), the EU hampered agreement on a full reduction in the NAFO skate TAC, but did agree to a modest quota reduction.

At the November 2009 annual meeting of ICCAT, the EU was again unsuccessful with its proposal for mako catch limits and also failed with a complicated proposal that would have set an excessive EU porbeagle TAC through ICCAT. The EU and Brazil were successful in efforts to establish an ICCAT prohibition on retaining the bigeye thresher shark, highlighted by scientists as the most vulnerable shark species taken in ICCAT fisheries.

The CMS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Migratory Sharks was adopted in February 2010 with support from the EU, although the EU has yet to sign it.

At the March 2010 annual meeting of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the EU won a vote on a proposal to prohibit retention of all thresher sharks.

Also in March 2010, the EU was again unsuccessful at CITES with its proposals to list spurdog and porbeagle under Appendix II, although the porbeagle proposal was adopted in Committee and narrowly defeated in plenary; Germany has contested this decision as its vote was not recorded.

In September 2010, the EU proposed halving the NAFO skate TAC, as advised by scientists, but did so in a manner that favoured EU fishermen and was therefore unacceptable to Canada.

At the ICCAT annual meeting in November 2010, the EU was again unsuccessful in attempts to protect the common thresher shark. A stronger EU porbeagle proposal (for full protection rather than catch limits) failed due to opposition from Canada. An EU proposal for hammerhead protection was adopted after exceptions were added. The EU supported Japan's successful bid to secure an ICCAT prohibition on retention of oceanic whitetip sharks.

In March 2011, at the annual IOTC meeting, the EU was unsuccessful with its proposals to protect hammerhead and oceanic whitetip sharks, and to require more specific shark catch reporting.

At the July 2011 meeting of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the EU was defeated in its efforts to protect hammerhead sharks. Both the EU and Japan proposed banning retention of oceanic whitetip sharks through IATTC; that effort was successful.

At the September 2011 NAFO meeting, the EU again proposed reducing the skate TAC to the level advised by scientists, but in a free-for-all manner that would have favoured EU fishermen and was therefore not acceptable to Canada. NAFO Parties agreed to reduce the skate TAC by half the amount advised by scientists and to revisit the TAC in 2012.

Recommendations

The Shark Alliance is calling on the European Commission to propose and the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers to support:

- **a science-based skate TAC through NAFO;**
- **a ban on retention of porbeagle sharks through ICCAT;**
- **international catch limits on shortfin mako sharks at ICCAT;**
- **caps on Atlantic blue shark catches through ICCAT;**
- **bans on retention of hammerheads at IATTC and IOTC;**
- **a ban on retention of oceanic whitetip sharks at IOTC;**
- **bans on at-sea fin removal at all RFMOs;**
- **species-specific shark and ray catch reporting at all RFMOs;**
- **CITES Appendix II listing for porbeagle and spurdog; and**
- **the EU becoming a signatory to the CMS Shark MoU.**

The Shark Alliance is a coalition of more than 100 conservation, scientific and recreational organisations dedicated to restoring and conserving shark populations by improving shark conservation policies. The Shark Alliance was initiated and is coordinated by the Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-government organisation that is working to end overfishing in the world's oceans.

Timeline

before and through 2006

June 1999
June 1999: The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization adopts the International Plan of Action for Sharks.

July 2003
The European Union (EU) bans shark finning.

July 2006
Shark Alliance is formed by five non-profit groups with aim to secure an EU Plan of Action for Sharks and close loopholes in EU shark finning ban.

September 2006
European Parliament calls for a stronger EU shark finning ban.

November 2006
EU Council of Fisheries Ministers reduces deep-sea shark total allowable catch (TAC) and begins gradual phase out of the fishery.

December 2006
EU Fisheries Council prohibits fishing, retaining, transshipping and landing of basking and white sharks.

2007

April
EU proposals to list spurdog and porbeagle sharks under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) fail.

October
First European Shark Week focuses on encouraging European Commission to develop an EU Shark Action Plan.

November
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Parties agree to reduce fishing of North Atlantic mako and porbeagle sharks.

December
EU Fisheries Council agrees first porbeagle quota reduction in spurdog and skate/ray TACs.

2008

March
UK grants protection for angel sharks.

June
Spurdog, porbeagle, angel sharks and three species of deepwater sharks added to OSPAR (Oslo-Paris Convention) List of Threatened and Declining Species.

September
EU opposes scientific advice to reduce international skate quota of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO).

October
European Shark Week results in more than 75,000 signatures urging national Fisheries Ministers to support a strong EU Shark Action Plan.

World Conservation Congress adopts global finning policy that calls on States to ban at-sea removal of shark fins.

November
EU proposes measures for mako, hammerhead, thresher and blue sharks at annual ICCAT meeting.

EU Fisheries Council agrees reduction in deep-sea shark TAC.

December
Belgian proposals to list spurdog and porbeagle under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) succeed.

EU Council protects angel sharks and three Threatened skates, reduces TACs for porbeagle and spurdog.

2009

February
European Commission releases EU Shark Action Plan, setting the stage for sweeping improvements in EU shark policies

March
Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) rejects EU proposal promoting use of plastic bags for attaching shark fins to bodies under regional finning ban.

April
EU Fisheries Council endorses the EU Shark Action Plan and highlights urgent need for stronger finning ban.

September
EU hampers adoption of science-based NAFO skate quota.

October
European Shark Week motivates more than 100,000 citizens to call for an end to Spain's opposition to improving the EU finning ban.

Spain announces national protections for hammerhead and thresher sharks.

November
EU proposals for mako catch limits and porbeagle protection fail at ICCAT meeting; EU thresher shark proposal results in protection for bigeye thresher.

December
European Council agrees to close porbeagle and spurdog fisheries.w

2010

February
CMS Memorandum of Understanding for Migratory Sharks adopted.

March
EU proposal for IOTC thresher shark protection succeeds.

EU-led proposals to list spurdog and porbeagle under CITES fail.

September
Four Members of European Parliament (MEPs) launch a Written Declaration calling on European Commission to end at-sea removal of shark fins.

EU and other Parties of NAFO commit to heeding scientific advice for skates at 2011 NAFO meeting.

Finnish Association for Nature Conservation becomes Shark Alliance 100th member group.

October
European Shark Week focuses on encouraging MEPs to sign the Written Declaration on finning.

Nov - Feb 2011
European Commission consults public on options for amending the EU Finning Regulation.

November
EU proposals for porbeagle and common thresher protection fail at ICCAT meeting, weakened version of hammerhead protection proposal passes.

EU Fisheries Council reduces deep-sea shark TAC, agrees closure (zero TAC) for 2012, and applies TAC to four additional deep-sea shark species.

December
Support from majority of MEPs transforms 'fins naturally attached' Written Declaration into Resolution of Parliament.

EU Fisheries Council sets spurdog and porbeagle fishing quotas at zero,protects Atlantic guitarfish, limits tope catch.

2011

March
Spain grants national protection for basking, white, hammerhead, and thresher sharks, as well as giant devil rays.

EU proposals to protect hammerhead and oceanic whitetip sharks and improve species-specific shark catch reporting fail at IOTC meeting.

July
EU and Japan succeed with Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission proposals to protect oceanic whitetip sharks.

September
NAFO Parties agree to reduce skate TAC by half the amount advised by scientists.

October
European Shark Week uses 'UnFINished business' theme to encourage EU Fisheries Ministers to fulfill commitments of EU Shark Action Plan, including a stronger Finning Regulation, sound shark fishing limits, and national protections for endangered species.

Last Quarter
European Commission proposes revised Finning Regulation.

2012

European Parliament and EU Fisheries Council consider Commission's proposal on EU finning rules and finalise changes to Regulation.


SHARK
ALLIANCE