

Fast Facts: Sharks & Portugal



- Portugal is ranked third among EU Member States for catches of sharks (consisting of mainly blue sharks followed by rays, makos, and deepwater species).
- Oceanic sharks are increasingly targeted by Portuguese fishermen and reportedly make up more than 80% of the catch from the Portugal's surface longline fleet.
- Portugal's wide-ranging longline fleet, the second largest in the EU, catches sharks in oceans all over the world.
- Portugal ranks 16th in the world for shark catch, according to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) data from recent years.
- Mako sharks are thought to be overfished in the North Atlantic; several populations of deepwater shark species, including the Portuguese dogfish, are classified as Endangered or Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- There are no Portuguese, EU, or international limits on the catch of blue or mako sharks; EU deepwater shark quotas have been reduced to near zero, but are not well enforced in Portugal.
- The EU banned shark "finning" – slicing off a shark's fins and discarding the body at sea – in 2003. The EU Finning Regulation generally prohibits the removal of shark fins on board fishing vessels, but allows Member States to grant fishermen special permits to derogate from this rule and separate fins from sharks at sea.
- Portugal and Spain are the only two EU Member States that still grant these special at-sea fin removal permits to their fishermen. The UK and Germany recently stopped issuing the permits in the interest of effective enforcement of the finning ban.