

The harvest for international fin trade is one of the greatest threats to the shark species proposed for inclusion in CITES Appendix II⁹. If gone unchecked, the high demand for shark fins will undoubtedly lead to further declines in the populations of these apex predators around the world. Inclusion in CITES Appendix II will ensure that international commercial trade of specimens and their fins does not put the species in danger. Export permits and “non-detriment findings” are necessary for species included in Appendix II and are only authorized if the specimen was legally obtained and if the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species

References

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- ⁹Proposal for the inclusion of Sphyrna lewini to CITES Appendix II. Amendments to Appendices I and II of CITES, CoP XV, 2010. August 2009; Consideration of Proposals for Amendment of Appendices I and II. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. p.1.
- ¹⁰Hong Kong Census Trade Statistic (2008). Courtesy of Bloom Association.



About Oceana

Oceana campaigns to protect and restore the world's oceans. Our teams of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and advocates win specific and concrete policy changes to reduce pollution and to prevent the irreversible collapse of fish populations, marine mammals and other sea life. Global in scope and dedicated to conservation, Oceana has campaigners based in North America, Europe and South and Central America. More than 300,000 members and e-activists in over 150 countries have already joined Oceana. For more information, please visit www.oceana.org



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The International Trade of Shark Fins: ENDANGERING SHARK POPULATIONS WORLDWIDE

MARCH 2010

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The human appetite for shark fin soup is leading to the collapse of shark populations worldwide. This soup, a part of traditional Chinese culture, dates back thousands of years. The soup was once a rarity available only to the upper class, but today, with improved fishing techniques and the skyrocketing demand from a larger and wealthier middle class, this product is increasingly available to the masses. Shark fin soup is often served at wedding banquets, business meals and other celebratory events to demonstrate wealth and honour.

The growing demand for shark fins in Asia often leads to shark finning, a wasteful and cruel practice in which the fins of a shark are cut off while at sea and the remainder of the animal is thrown back into the water. Shark finning only utilises two to five percent of the entire animal, throwing away sources of protein and potential commercial or pharmaceutical products. While this practice is illegal in many parts of the world, it is still carried out in regions without such regulations, or often illegally where already prohibited.

The international trade of shark fins requires CITES regulation. Oceana urges you to support Proposals 15 (on *Sphyrna lewini*, *S. mokarran*, *S. zygaena*, *Carcharhinus plumbeus*, *C. obscurus*) and 16 (on *Carcharhinus longimanus*) for inclusion in Appendix II of CITES. These shark species are among the most impacted by the international fin trade.

Shark fins can be extremely expensive. They can be sold in Asia for up to 1,000€ per fin or up to 80€ per bowl¹. The most expensive fins, usually from large shark species like whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*), are used as displays in shark fin shops and shark fin soup restaurants. The fact that shark meat sells for substantially cheaper than the fins (approximately 10€ compared to 500€ per kilo) leads to the proliferation of shark finning, as fishermen prefer to fill their boats with fins instead of shark meat.

In 2008, nearly 10,000,000 kg of shark fins were imported into Hong Kong, the world's largest single market for this product². The fins were exported by 87 countries and regions from around the world. They came in dried and frozen form. Specifically, Hong Kong based companies imported nearly

4,314,000 kg of dried fins and nearly 5,636,000 kg of frozen fins. In 2008, the world's top exporters of shark fins (frozen and dried) to Hong Kong were Spain, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia and United Arab Emirates, as shown in Table 1.

Sharks are caught for their fins as both target and non-target catch. Oceanic sharks in particular, historically caught as bycatch, are now officially and overwhelmingly targeted for their fins. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) reports that more than 40 percent of highly migratory oceanic sharks are overexploited³. According to the FAO, a total of approximately 527,000 metric tons of sharks were caught in 2007⁴. However, it is important to point out that illegal or unreported fishing, along with missing data, mean that this figure can be three times higher. According to studies of the global shark fin market, trade of fins represents between 1.1 and 2.2 million tons of annual shark catches in the world's oceans⁵. Up to 73 million sharks are killed each year to satisfy the demand of the international shark fin market⁶.

Sharks are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation because they generally grow slowly and live long lives. Their relatively low reproductive rates mean their populations are slow to recover once overfished. Shark populations are being depleted around the world due to the high demand for their fins. For example, the North Atlantic population of oceanic whitetips declined by an estimated 70 percent in the 1990s⁷ and scalloped hammerheads have declined by 83 percent in the Northwest Atlantic since the 1980s⁸.



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Table 1. Origins of shark fin exports to Hong Kong¹⁰ Total product weight (kg): dried and frozen fins exported to Hong Kong in 2008^a

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------|------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------|
| Spain | 2646442 | New Zealand | 79789 | Bangladesh | 16899 | Seychelles | 2594 |
| Singapore | 1201236 | Philippines | 73320 | Marshall Islands | 16870 | Germany | 2512 |
| Taiwan | 990664 | Senegal | 70796 | Congo P.R. | 14980 | Solomon Islands | 2423 |
| Indonesia | 681012 | Guyana | 58369 | Morocco | 14623 | Honduras | 2210 |
| United Arab Emirates | 511197 | Canada | 57828 | Mozambique | 14622 | Angola | 2134 |
| Costa Rica | 327385 | Oman | 55757 | Venezuela | 14592 | Kuwait | 1865 |
| USA | 251310 | Guinea Conakry | 50735 | China ^b | 13096 | Kiribati | 1546 |
| Yemen | 226738 | Madagascar | 40107 | Vietnam | 12078 | Cuba | 1333 |
| Mexico | 216833 | Pakistan | 39807 | Kenya | 10984 | Nigeria | 1308 |
| Brazil | 200732 | Sri Lanka | 39448 | Saudi Arabia | 8858 | Cote D'Ivoire | 1062 |
| Argentina | 185380 | Uruguay | 39059 | Nicaragua | 8657 | Turkey | 1048 |
| South Africa | 182953 | Norway | 38236 | Tonga | 7981 | France | 847 |
| Netherlands | 171863 | Mauritania | 37396 | Maldives | 7593 | Iceland | 708 |
| Japan | 162276 | Chile | 36249 | Tunisia | 7045 | Sudan | 377 |
| Ecuador | 134726 | Colombia | 27247 | Egypt | 6666 | Iran | 300 |
| Peru | 121548 | Malaysia | 25341 | Andorra | 5932 | Macau | 222 |
| India | 117241 | Togo | 24918 | Namibia | 5280 | Micronesia & Palau | 217 |
| South Korea | 104177 | El Salvador | 21591 | Aust. + Oceania | 4715 | Congo Dem. R | 121 |
| Trinidad & Tobago | 103104 | Gabon | 19922 | Gambia | 4288 | Bahrain | 114 |
| Australia | 95014 | Mauritius | 18844 | Liberia | 4215 | | |
| Fiji | 93884 | Guatemala | 18070 | Suriname | 3809 | | |
| Panama | 85151 | Papua New Guinea | 17258 | Tanzania | 3024 | | |
| | | | | | | Total | 9949556 |

^aShark fins are exported to Hong Kong in four different product categories and commodity codes: Dried Unprocessed shark fins (0305-5950), Dried processed shark fins (0305-5960), Unprocessed shark fins, salted or in brine (frozen) (0305-6930) and Processed shark fins salted or in brine (frozen) (0305-6940). This table shows the sum of product weights of the shark fins from these four categories. Further calculations and adjustments of data are necessary to estimate the corresponding raw weight of the shark fins or corresponding amount of sharks caught. For further information, see: Clarke, S. (2004). Shark Product Trade in Hong Kong and Mainland China and Implementation of the CITES Shark Listings. TRAFFIC East Asia, Hong Kong, China.

^bThis 2008 importation from China contains 527 kg of processed shark fins (dried and frozen). Shark fins are typically imported into Hong Kong in raw form, shipped to China for processing and then re-imported by Hong Kong as processed shark fins. Therefore, the figure for China might contain double counted shark fins. See: Clarke, S. (2004). Shark Product Trade in Hong Kong and Mainland China and Implementation of the CITES Shark Listings. TRAFFIC East Asia, Hong Kong, China.