

A CITES PRIORITY:

SHARKS AND THE TWELFTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO CITES, SANTIAGO CHILE, 2002

IUCN & TRAFFIC BRIEFING DOCUMENT
OCTOBER 2002

FURTHER MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF SHARK SPECIES IN TRADE WILL BE CONSIDERED AT THE TWELFTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO CITES (COP12). DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (COP12 DOC. 41.1 AND 41.2), IF ADOPTED BY THE PARTIES, WOULD ENCOURAGE AND COMPLEMENT ACTION BEING TAKEN BY THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF UNITED NATIONS (FAO) THROUGH ITS VOLUNTARY INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SHARKS (IPOA-SHARKS). THE PARTIES WILL ALSO CONSIDER THE MERITS OF REGULATING INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN WHALE SHARK *RHINCODON TYPUS* AND BASKING SHARK *CETORHINUS MAXIMUS*.

CITES first began to play an active role with regard to shark conservation and trade in 1994, when the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 9) adopted Resolution Conf. 9.17 *The Status of International Trade in Shark Species*. The Parties subsequently agreed a series of Decisions calling for specific actions related to shark fisheries management and trade at CoP 10 (1997) and CoP11 (2000). Included in the discussions and the decisions of the Parties was recognition of the fact that the FAO's IPOA-Sharks was crucial to the conservation and management of sharks, and that FAO members needed to be encouraged to take action to implement the IPOA. Continuing the close liaison between CITES and the FAO will be critical to ensuring that their efforts are not only complementary, but also synergistic.

Why are sharks susceptible to overexploitation?

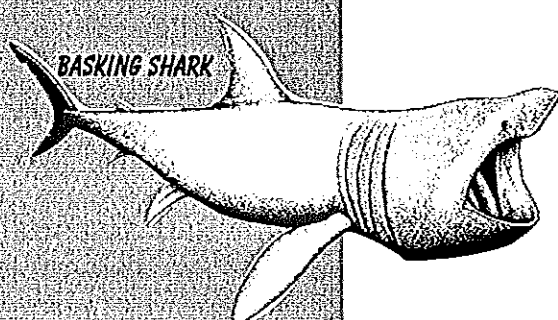
As a general rule, most shark species are far less able to adapt to exploitation than are many of the bony fishes. Most sharks are long-lived, slow-growing, mature late and give birth to only a few pups after a long gestation period. The number of young born is in direct proportion to the number of mature females in the population. This life cycle strategy, typical of top predators with few natural enemies, means that sharks cannot recover rapidly from exploitation by humans. Some sharks have a natural rate of population increase of only 1-2% per annum. Sharks cannot start breeding until physically large enough to bear their large young, and maturing at a younger age or producing more pups per litter in response to falling population numbers is almost impossible for them. Removing large sharks does not increase the survival of young of the same species; cannibalism is rare in predatory sharks (because juveniles occupy nursery grounds well away from the adult population) and does not occur with plankton-feeding species.

Could sharks become extinct?

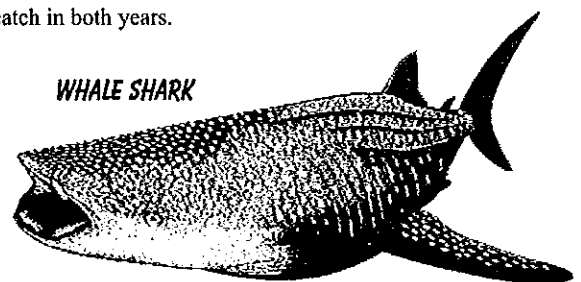
As has been noted by recent FAO Technical Papers, commercial fisheries can pose risks of long-term detrimental impacts to, or even extinction of, certain marine species. In relation to sharks, some species are already categorised as threatened with extinction in the 2000 IUCN Red List. This reflects a combination of the species' biology and the fact that sharks are not only taken in directed fisheries (which stop when the target species become too rare for economic exploitation), but are also caught incidentally (as bycatch) in other fisheries. So long as fishing activity continues in areas where sharks occur, they will continue to be caught (and landed, if markets exist). Their populations may continue to decline, potentially until the last individuals have been removed.

How extensive are global shark fisheries?

The total shark catch reported to FAO for 2000 was 828 364 tonnes. This catch is the highest on record and represents an increase of 20% since 1990. In 1990 a total of 101 countries reported shark landings, compared with 118 in 2000. The same 13 countries accounted for 68% of the catch in both 1990 and 2000, and 24 countries took 88% of the catch in both years.



BASKING SHARK



WHALE SHARK

Internet links to sharks and CITES related documents:

FAO: 2001. A background analysis and framework for evaluating the status of commercially-exploited aquatic species in a CITES context. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/003/Y1455E.htm>

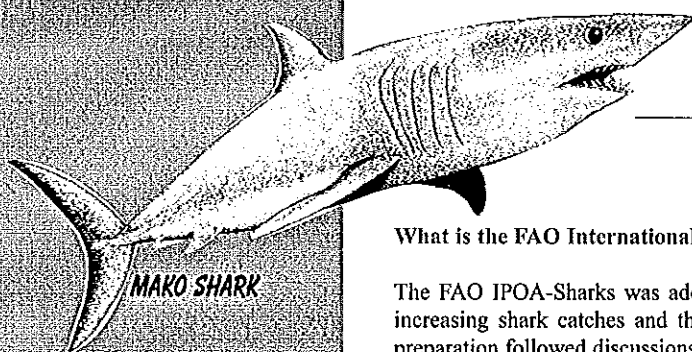
The key points from an appraisal of the technical consultation on the suitability of the CITES criteria for listing commercially exploited aquatic species. Rome, Italy, June 2000. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/X48946.htm>

A preliminary evaluation of the status of shark species; FAO Fisheries Technical Paper, No. 380. <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/X2352E/X2352E00.HTM>

Shark catch in tonnes reported to FAO by major shark fishing nations* in 1990 and 2000

Country	1990	2000
Indonesia	73 272	111 973
Spain	14 163	77 269
India	51 230	72 090
Pakistan	40 043	51 170
Taiwan	75 731	45 923
Mexico	44 880	35 260
Japan	32 103	33 072
USA	34 576	30 935
Sri Lanka	15 263	28 014
Argentina	16 687	25 716
Malaysia	17 360	24 521
France	26 310	22 794
Brazil	24 690	18 480
New Zealand	10 108	17 718
UK	21 776	17 392
Thailand	10 950	16 213
South Korea	15 721	15 395
Nigeria	8 402	13 238
Total	533 265	657 173

NB: Global catch for 1990 was 693 001 tonnes and in 2000 828 364 tonnes. Source: FAO Fishstat.
 * Major shark fishing nations are defined here as those whose annual landings as reported to FAO exceeded 10,000 tonnes in 2000. The list excludes Australia and Canada, whose landings had declined from over 10,000 t in 1999.



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What is the FAO International Plan of Action (IPOA) for Sharks?

The FAO IPOA-Sharks was adopted in 1999. The IPOA-Sharks was drawn up because of concern over increasing shark catches and the consequences that these have for the populations of some species. Its preparation followed discussions and recommendations at CITES CoP 9 and CoP 10, including a request for FAO to develop a programme to implement shark fishery data collection and management. The IPOA recognises the vulnerability of sharks to fisheries and the urgent need for management of some species, providing an important framework for improving shark fisheries management. It stresses the importance of international collaboration between States for the management of transboundary, straddling and highly migratory species, and the collection of data (including trade data). The IPOA is, however, purely voluntary and still untested. Implementation relies on shark-fishing States producing a Shark Assessment Report (SAR) and drawing up a National Plan of Action (NPOA).

Is the IPOA-Sharks being adequately implemented?

Only 29 States have reported (to FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) 11 2001) any progress thus far with IPOA implementation. Of these, just six States had SAR or NPOA available for public consultation and review; no documents were available from other shark fishing States to support statements to COFI of progress with implementation. None of the major shark-fishing nations had produced a SAR by the end of September 2002. Two had completed a NPOA, and a draft NPOA had been prepared by the European Union (on behalf of its member States). An IUCN/TRAFFIC review of these draft and completed NPOAs concluded that all failed to meet some of the standards recommended by FAO (see AC18 Doc. 19.2). The Government of Australia has recently completed a NPOA, which it expects to implement in 2003. IUCN/TRAFFIC have assessed the Australian draft NPOA and conclude that it meets the standards recommended by FAO.

How can CITES complement the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks?

The FAO IPOA-Sharks recognises that 'other forms of cooperation' besides regional and subregional fisheries organisations or arrangements may be applied when implementing the IPOA. As both FAO and CITES are concerned with encouraging sustainable management of wild species in trade, including fish, and most shark fishing nations are both CITES Parties and FAO members, there are natural opportunities for the two institutions to work more closely together to achieve mutual goals. This includes in the area of information management and exchange. The success of shark fisheries management, and hence the IPOA-Sharks, is dependent on accurate trade data at a suitable level of specificity. While there are customs coding systems for the collection of trade data, the shark product codes that most countries have adopted are too general to be of any benefit for the purposes of species specific management. CITES and FAO could work together to call for an increase in the specificity of trade data for sharks, and CITES, as the international instrument that specifically monitors and regulates international trade in species of conservation concern, could assist with data collection for selected species. This could be achieved through the adoption of relevant Resolutions and/or Decisions of the Parties. Further, CITES Parties, through the inclusion of a species within the CITES appendices, can take a more active role in the monitoring and regulation of international trade in and the promotion of sustainable management for those species. It is therefore crucial to the success of the IPOA-Sharks that CITES continues its involvement in moving for better monitoring and regulation of international trade and encouraging the implementation of sustainable shark fisheries management measures.

The Whale Shark and Basking Shark Proposals for CoP12

CoP12 Prop.36 Inclusion of Basking Shark *Cetorhinus maximus* in Appendix II
Proponent: United Kingdom (on behalf of the Member States of the European Community)

The Basking Shark is a large (13.7 m) plankton-eating fish. It is widely distributed in coastal and continental shelf and shelf edge waters of temperate zones in the northern and southern hemispheres. It is long-lived (c. 50 years) and has a low reproductive rate. The Basking Shark migrates seasonally to coastal areas in response to plankton blooms. Directed fisheries have caught the species for centuries, but these fisheries are, like those for other large sharks, rarely productive for longer than 10-20 years before stocks collapse, and take up to 100 years to rebuild. Currently, the only directed fishery in operation appears to be the Norwegian fishery, which is in decline and took only an estimated 36 Basking Sharks in 2001, compared with over 600 a year in the early 1990s and an average of 2500 a year (maximum 4500) in the 1960s and 1970s. However, the high value of fins is generally thought to encourage the harvesting of Basking Sharks taken as bycatch. Basking Shark products have been reported in international trade and fisheries have apparently resulted in rapid and persistent declines in numbers within targeted areas. TRAFFIC is recommending that Parties accept the listing proposal for Basking Shark at CoP12.

CoP12 Prop.35 Inclusion of Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus* in Appendix II
Proponent: India and Philippines

The Whale Shark is the world's largest fish (15 m in length) and eats only plankton and small fishes. It occurs in warm, tropical and temperate waters of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. It is highly migratory between ocean basins and national jurisdictions, but apparently returns to the same sites annually or at multi-annual intervals. Little is known of its biology. It is thought to be long-lived (60-100 years), late maturing (~30 years) and gives birth to relatively small live young that are likely to have a high natural mortality rate. The species is in international trade, and demand is mainly for meat; the fins are not considered to be of high quality. Currently Taiwan comprises the main meat market, and there is little evidence of international trade to other destinations. Taiwan instituted a catch recording and market monitoring system in 2001, however this does not yet appear to be fully operational. There have been reports of illegal trade. TRAFFIC considers that the species meets the CITES listing criteria and is recommending that Parties accept the listing proposal for Whale Shark at CoP12.

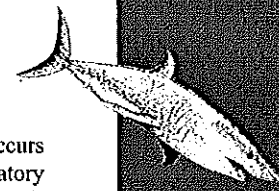
Internal links to sharks and CITES related documents:

IUCN and TRAFFIC Director of
CITES in the conservation and
management of Shark
[http://www.traffic.org/coP12/
csf02.html](http://www.traffic.org/coP12/csf02.html)

IUCN and TRAFFIC Report on
Implementation of the International
Plan of Action
for Sharks (IPOA-Sharks)
Paper submitted for discussion at the
16th CITES Animals Committee
meeting, CoP12 Re. April 2002
[http://www.traffic.org/news/
iposharks.html](http://www.traffic.org/news/
iposharks.html)

The IUCN/TRAFFIC Analysis of
Proposals to Amend the CITES
Appendices Prepared for the 12th
meeting of the Conference of the
Parties
(CoP12) [http://iucn.org/themes/ss/c/
cites/coP12/coP12analyse.htm](http://iucn.org/themes/ss/c/
cites/coP12/coP12analyse.htm)

TRAFFIC Recommendations on
proposal to amend the Appendices
at the 12th Meeting of the
Conference of the Parties to CITES
[http://www.traffic.org/coP12/
trafrec.html](http://www.traffic.org/coP12/
trafrec.html)



CoP12 Agenda Point 10: Conservation of Sharks

The Parties have been presented with two discussion documents, one submitted by Australia (CoP12 Doc. 41.1) and another by Ecuador (CoP12 Doc. 41.2). Both include draft Resolutions for consideration by the Parties. A Resolution or Decision in keeping with the spirit of these documents would further CITES' role in the conservation of sharks and complement that of FAO, including encouragement for countries to implement the FAO IPOA-Sharks.

The CITES Secretariat has produced some suggested changes to the structure of the respective draft Resolutions, and has suggested that it would be more appropriate to consider the suggested text as a Decision of the Parties rather than as a Resolution. IUCN and TRAFFIC agree that a series of Decisions would be more appropriate, and consider it imperative for Parties to adopt a series of Decisions based on the two draft Resolutions, including as a minimum the following time-bound action points:

Directed to the CITES Animals Committee:

1. Continue activities specified under Decision 11.94 beyond CITES CoP12, and report on progress at CoP 13;
2. Examine information provided by range States in shark assessment reports and other available relevant documents, with a view to identifying species that appear to be subject to overexploitation for international trade and that should be considered for inclusion in the CITES appendices at CoP13;

Directed to the CITES Secretariat:

3. Raise with FAO concerns over the significant lack of progress by FAO members and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOS) in implementing the IPOA-Sharks and urge FAO to take steps to actively encourage the implementation of the IPOA;
4. Work with the FAO to investigate the potential to increase the specificity of Customs codes used within the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System for shark products in trade and report on progress at the next meeting of the CITES Animals Committee;
5. Critically review progress towards IPOA-Sharks implementation by RFMOs and CITES Parties one year prior to CoP 13 and report to the Standing Committee on progress made;

Directed to the Parties:

6. Comply fully with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and FAO IPOA-Sharks;
7. Obtain information on IPOA-Sharks implementation from fisheries departments and report directly on progress to future meetings of the CITES Animals Committee;
8. Continue to identify shark species that appear to be subject to overexploitation for international trade and consider whether they should be considered for inclusion in the CITES appendices if their management and conservation status does not improve;
9. Ensure that CITES Management Authorities collaborate with national Customs authorities to expand their current classification system to allow for the collection of more detailed data on shark trade. These should include, where possible, separate categories for processed and unprocessed products, for meat, cartilage, skin and fins, and distinguish imports, exports and re-exports. Wherever possible, such data should be species-specific. Parties should report on progress at the next meeting of the Animals Committee.

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