

# Enhance International Shark Conservation



## Support Proposal 16 to include Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) in CITES Appendix II.



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*Advocates for Wild, Healthy Oceans*



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*The Ocean Conservancy and the Shark Alliance urge CITES Delegates to: Support Proposal 16 to include Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) in CITES Appendix II.*

*As proposed by Germany on behalf of the European Community Member States acting in the interest of the European Community.*

### **SPINY DOGFISH ARE:**

- exceptionally slow-growing sharks found in temperate seas around the world
- taken worldwide in fisheries that often target pregnant females
- included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as “Vulnerable” globally
- considered “Endangered” in the Northwest Atlantic, “Critically Endangered” off Europe
- subject to persistent demand that drives targeted fisheries around the world
- traded internationally in substantial quantities
- inadequately managed in most countries, and
- not subject to bilateral or international management measures outside the EU

### **The strong case for listing spiny dogfish under CITES Appendix II presented in the EC proposal is bolstered by the expert analyses of:**

- TRAFFIC
- IUCN (World Conservation Union)
- Independent consultants to the European Commission, and
- The CITES Secretariat

## A highly vulnerable species

Spiny dogfish are exceptionally vulnerable to overfishing and long lasting depletion due to their slow growth, late maturity, and small litters. Female dogfish don't mature until between 10 and 35 years of age. Their 18-22 month gestation period is among the longest of any animal, after which they give birth to only 2-15 pups. In a study of rebound potential in 26 species of sharks, spiny dogfish had the lowest rate of recovery.

Spiny dogfish meet the criteria developed by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) for CITES listing of commercially exploited aquatic species. A low intrinsic rate of population increase (2 – 7 % per year) and a generation time of greater than 25 years put spiny dogfish into the FAO's lowest productivity category.

Spiny dogfish school by size and sex; schools of mature and usually pregnant females, which grow larger than males, are often the target of fisheries.

## Seriously depleted populations

European demand for spiny dogfish is leading to the serial overfishing of populations around the world. Depletion of European populations by the late 1980s led to development of fisheries in the US and Argentina. Once US Atlantic populations declined, interest in dogfish fishing, primarily for export to Europe, shifted to Atlantic Canada, New Zealand, the US west coast, and Morocco.

The Northeast Atlantic spiny dogfish population has declined 95% from baseline while reproductive biomass in the Northwest Atlantic dropped by 75% within just ten years. All but two populations meet the criteria for inclusion in CITES Appendix II under Res Conf 9.24 (Rev CoP13), Annex 2a A and B, thereby qualifying the species for listing.

## Inadequate or non existent management

Management of spiny dogfish fisheries is in place in only a few range states; no program covers the range of targeted populations; most have been inadequate to safeguard populations. A strong US Atlantic rebuilding plan is regularly undermined by excessive state limits, resulting in serious quota overages and a recent resurgence in unsustainable, targeted fishing. Spiny dogfish migrate across national boundaries and yet there are no bilateral or regional fisheries management measures for the species outside the EU.

## Valuable in trade

Strong, persistent demand for meat, primarily from the European Union (EU), is driving unsustainable spiny dogfish

fisheries around the world. Fins are also exported to Asia for use in shark fin soup. The top suppliers of dogfish meat to the EU are the US, Norway, and Canada. In recent years, Argentina and Morocco have become increasingly important dogfish exporters.

## Valuable in ecosystems

Like most sharks, spiny dogfish serve as important predators. They feed on a variety of small fish and invertebrates and are eaten by marine mammals as well as larger sharks and fish. Healthy populations of spiny dogfish are key to keeping ocean ecosystems in balance.

## Including spiny dogfish in CITES Appendix II is:

- justified under the criteria in Res Conf 9.24 (Rev CoP13), Annex 2a A and B
- essential for ensuring that international trade is held to sustainable levels
- complementary to existing fisheries management measures
- likely to spark enhanced assessment and management of populations worldwide
- important for improving international cooperation necessary for conservation
- needed to end the serial population depletion driven by international trade
- key to improving data on the nature and extent of dogfish fisheries and trade, and
- consistent with the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks.

## IT'S TIME

CITES has been discussing sharks since 1994. Spiny dogfish have long been among the most relevant shark species for CITES attention due to their extreme vulnerability, widespread depletion, and substantial presence in international trade.

The Animals Committee Shark Working Group has examined and found merit in proposals to list spiny dogfish since 2004. Existing management programs alone are not working and time is running out.

## The Ocean Conservancy and the Shark Alliance urge CITES Delegates to vote in favor of Proposal 16 to include spiny dogfish under CITES Appendix II.