

**Information embargoed until May 17<sup>th</sup>, 10.30 BST**



**FACTSHEET ON EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THAT HAVE ISSUED SPECIAL FISHING PERMITS ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 4 OF THE FINNING REGULATION**

**May 2007**

According to Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 of 26 June 2003, vessels flying an EU Member State flag, or fishing in EU waters, are forbidden to remove fins of sharks on-board vessels. Exceptions allowing on-board removal of fins from dead sharks may be made if aimed at a more efficient use of all shark parts through this on-board processing of fins and remaining shark parts. In this case, the flag Member State should issue and manage, with associated conditions, a special fishing permit in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1627/94 of 27 June 1994.

Out of twenty-seven EU Member States, five have issued such special fishing permits (in 2005 and 2006): Germany (5), UK (16), Portugal (34), Spain (186) and Lithuania (1). The situation of the permits for Germany, UK, Portugal and Spain are further described below. At the time of writing, no detailed information was available to the authors about the Lithuanian license.

**GERMANY**

According to FAO data, Germany's shark landings rose significantly from 14 t in 1991 to 859 t in 2004, the highest catch since the 1970s. The European Union closed the deep-sea gillnet fishery in 2005 and due to that, Germany reported only 346 t of shark landings that year.

In 2005, Germany issued five special fishing permits to vessels fishing for deep-sea sharks in the Celtic sea, southwest of Ireland.

Vessels with these permits operate out of the Spanish harbour of La Coruna and are partly owned and managed by Spanish companies. Most of the associated catches are landed and sold at the market in Galicia, Spain.

In 2004, these five vessels participated in deep-sea gillnet fisheries that took deepwater sharks. The fishery was closed by an emergency measure in 2005, based on scientists' warnings of severe depletion of these especially vulnerable shark species.

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Scientists continue to recommend a zero catch for deepwater sharks. In December 2006, the EU Council instead agreed a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the species group of 75% of the 2003 fishing effort for deep-sea sharks, with plans to reduce fishing further by a quarter each year, until it reaches zero in 2010.

In accordance with this TAC, the deepwater shark quota allocation for Germany in 2007 is 59 t, which has been granted to three ships that applied for special fishing permits.

### **UK**

With reported catches of 10,625 t in 2005, the UK is a major shark fishing nation within Europe and indeed the world.

In 2005, the UK issued 16 special fishing permits to vessels using deep water gillnets in the Northeast Atlantic (including the continental slopes west of the British Isles and Rockall Bank area) to target monkfish, blue ling, megrim, king crab as well as rays and sharks such as spiny dogfish (spurdog), kitefin shark, Portuguese dogfish, leafscale gulper shark and gulper shark.

All these vessels are equipped with freezing facilities. Oil from the livers of the deepwater sharks is used to produce cosmetics and pharmaceutical products.

Almost all these vessels are operating from the Spanish harbour of La Coruna and are partly owned and operated by Spanish companies. Most of the catches are landed directly in Spain or unloaded in the UK and then shipped to Spain. Catches are sold in Galicia.

It is important to note that the UK special fishing permits are stricter than those of the other member states in that they require that fins and carcasses be landed together in the same port, something that is not stipulated in the finning regulation.

### **PORTUGAL**

In 2005, shark catches of 15,360 t made Portugal the third largest shark fishing country in Europe, after Spain and France.

According to the latest information from the Portuguese fisheries directorate, Portugal issued 34 special fishing permits, a sharp increase from 2004 when 11 permits were issued. Portugal operates a surface longline fleet that is directly targeting sharks in EU waters and further afield. In 2005, 79% of the reported Portuguese surface longliner catches in the Atlantic were sharks.

Portuguese fishing vessels catch sharks in the Atlantic Ocean (87% of the total Portuguese shark catches) and in the Indian Ocean (13%). The targeted species

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are mainly blue shark, followed by mako, thresher and hammerhead sharks. All Portuguese longliners have on-board freezing capacity and remove shark fins promptly after catching the sharks. Portuguese longliners keep the catch of the last 15 days chilled and land these sharks whole, with fins still attached. A portion of the Portuguese shark catches, especially the fins, are shipped to Galicia and traded from there.

### **SPAIN**

Spain is Europe's leading shark fishing country, with a reported catch of 38,069 t in 2005. Spanish vessels catch pelagic sharks in the Atlantic Ocean (85% of overall reported Spanish shark catches), the Indian Ocean (8%), the Pacific Ocean (6%) and some sharks in the Southern Ocean. Spanish vessels mostly catch blue, mako, hammerhead and thresher sharks.

In 2005, Spain issued 186 special fishing permits to surface longline vessels, just a few fewer than in 2004 (198). These vessels either target pelagic sharks or sharks and swordfish to the same extent.

Although officially still labeled bycatch, sharks now dominate the catches of the Spanish surface longline fishery. In the Atlantic, 67% of the catches of the fleet are sharks. In the Pacific and Indian Ocean, sharks make up almost 50% of all reported Spanish catches. All Spanish longline vessels have on-board freezer capacity; often fins are removed immediately and frozen on-board along with the shark meat. The catch of the last 15 days, however, is kept only chilled and the sharks are landed whole, with fins still attached.

The Spanish longline fleet lands their sharks in many ports worldwide. Most of the catch is shipped afterwards to fishing companies in Vigo, Galicia. From there, most of the shark meat is exported to European markets, predominantly to Italy, and the shark fins are shipped to Hong Kong or to other East Asia markets.