

Shark fins and finning

FAST FACTS

- Finning is the wasteful practice of slicing off a shark's fins and dumping the body at sea.
- Sharks are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation – they grow slowly and produce relatively few young (2-80 pups, compared to millions of eggs for tuna and swordfish).
- There are alarming declines in European shark populations and no EU or international catch limits for the oceanic sharks most likely to be finned.
- The EU finning ban is among the weakest in the world. Now the Fisheries Committee has recommended increasing the fin to body ratio, effectively facilitating the illegal finning of more than 66% of sharks caught.

BLUE SHARKS (*Prionace glauca*)

- The IUCN Red List threat status for the overfished North Atlantic blue shark (which ranges across the entire ocean basin) is being heightened from **Near Threatened** to **Vulnerable**.
- Catches of male blue sharks from the US Atlantic from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s fell 80%.
- Blue shark catch rates have also declined markedly in the Mediterranean.



Our organisations urge the European Parliament to recommend strengthening rather than weakening the finning regulation.

The following fast facts are intended to clarify key issues emerging in the related debate.

ICCAT conclusions

- Scientists for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) have acknowledged differences in fin to body ratios across shark species as well as differences in fin removal practices, but have not recommended an increase in the fin to body ratio for the blue shark or any other species.
- The latest report on shark fin to carcass ratios prepared for ICCAT concluded that a 5% dressed weight ratio (equivalent to about 2% whole weight) is an appropriate upper limit for fisheries taking a mix of shark species, including the blue shark.



Other scientific advice

- The International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has not reviewed or offered any advice on shark fin to body weight ratios.
- A shark fin to whole body ratio of 2% has been recommended by the IUCN and the world's foremost association of shark scientists.

Other Red Listed sharks

- One third of European sharks qualify for the IUCN Red List of Threatend Species.
- Northeast Atlantic porbeagles and Mediterranean shortfin makos classify as **Critically Endangered**.
- Northeast Atlantic shortfin makos and Mediterranean thresher sharks are considered **Vulnerable**.

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