Shark conservation: A Portuguese NGO perspective
Introduction

- Sharks have been swimming the Earth's seas for more than 400 million years, but now face an uncertain future

- They are important as top predators

- **Sharks are especially susceptible to overexploitation, owing to their specific biological and life history characteristics**

- Long life spans and slow growth

- Long reproductive cycles

- Late maturity (with some species not giving birth until the age of 20 or above)

- Small number of offspring

- Slow to recover once depleted
Introduction

- Sharks populations are declining worldwide due to overfishing

- Contrary to popular belief, Europe plays a major role in the global catch, export and import of sharks

SHARKS AT RISK!
Introduction

Worldwide Concern

- NGOs and some Governmental institutions promote public events alerting to shark over-fishing and finning

- Many reports and web sites show the extent of this problem
Press and media

- Media have an important role informing about shark overfishing

- Ongoing concern

- Making people aware

- More than 100 million Sharks are caught every Year (FAO, 2007)

Three sharks die every second (Shark Foundation, 2007)
Shark Fisheries

- Both pelagic and deep-sea sharks such as hammerheads, oceanic whitetips, deep-sea sharks and thresher sharks are being massively depleted by overfishing (mainly as bycatch).

According to CITES and FAO:
- more than 100 out of 400 shark species are being commercially exploited
- many of these shark species are so overexploited that even their long-term survival can no longer be guaranteed
- a serious monitoring and control program is lacking for international shark trade.
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Shark Landings

- Spain, Portugal, the UK and France are among the world's top 20 shark fishing nations (which are responsible for 80 per cent of the global catch).

- However, Total EU landings have dropped in recent years, with the exception of Spain whose catch increased dramatically.

Source: © CDNN - CYBER DIVER NEWS NETWORK
Source: www.seashepherd.org
Source: www.parcdistributors.net
Portugal is among the world 5 top catchers – contributing with 10.5% of total catches
Shark Fishing in Portugal

- Shark catches are increasing, threatening reproductivity and therefore endangering shark populations

- Recreational and commercial shark fisheries are increasing without rules or effective inspection

- Only deep-sea shark catches are regulated
Portugal needs

- A sustainable management of shark fisheries – Responsible fishing
- Implement conservation measures to protect shark populations
- Adopt restrictions on shark fisheries to limit catches
- Minimize bycatch fishing of sharks.
- Stop issuing special fishing permits which allow removal of fins at sea.
- Promote these measures at the EU.

Source: www.animalport.com
**Measures**

1. Develop extensive studies on shark populations
2. Assess periodically the state of shark stocks
3. Regulate shark fisheries under the National Fisheries Policy
4. Establish TACs, quotas and recreational limits.
5. Monitoring shark fisheries
6. Effective inspection of shark fishing
7. Better control of shark landings
8. Monitoring and surveillance of recreational shark fisheries
9. Develop and promote measures to minimize bycatch
10. Sharks landed with fins attached (discontinue special fishing permits)
Recommendations

- Recommendations for effective management proposed by NGOs*

- Landings of sharks with their fins attached and landed at the same port
- Fishing of commercially exploited shark species by EU vessels must be regulated under the Common Fisheries Policy, with fishing limits and quotas.
- Controlling Shark fisheries wherever the EU fleet operates – in European waters and worldwide.
- Migratory shark species exploited on the high seas must be regulated with catch limits and quotas.
- Effective management measures for bycatch reduction must be introduced and shark discards must be eliminated.
- Secure national legislation and regional agreements to protect and conserve shark species listed under global and regional wildlife treaties and those considered Endangered or Critically Endangered
- Vessels taking sharks must have independent observer coverage on board.
- Distinct trade statistics for shark products (meat, fins and liver oil), differentiated by species, must be developed.
- Develop an European Plan of Action for Sharks must be implemented that includes precautionary limits on catch based on ICES advice,
- Recovery plans for depleted species and management plans for others.

* Oceana, Shark Alliance
Final Remarks

- Sharks are important to ocean ecosystems.

- The environmental impact of removing large numbers of sharks from ocean ecosystems is hugely complex and unpredictable.

- Most sharks are top predators and scientists believe sharks play a key role in marine ecosystems by keeping their prey populations in check.

- Removing this control is likely to have a damaging effect on marine ecosystems.

- Biodiversity is also affected
- Sharks fill an important ecological niche, keeping in balance the numbers of animals lower on the food chain.

- Yet populations of sharks are remarkably fragile.

- Unregulated shark fisheries can result in population collapse within a few years and take decades or centuries to recover, if at all.
14 References


Shark Alliance at http://www.sharkalliance.org/

Shark Trust at: http://www.sharktrust.org/


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Paul Joachim’s Illustration from www.artwiredmedia.com/elements/shark.jpg


CDNN - Environmentalists sue NOAA, NMFS over coastal shark fishing at http://www.cdnn.info/eco/e020201/e020201.html

Shark-finning measures ‘too weak’ By Elli Leadbeater, 31 August 2006, at http://news.bbc.co.uk

The beginning...

Changing mentalities

Protecting the environment

Action is needed

NOW IS THE TIME!
Thank you