

Education - Shark Finning Facts

What is Shark Finning?

- Shark finning refers to the removal and retention of shark fins and the discard at sea of the carcass. The shark is most often still alive when it is tossed back into the water. Unable to swim, the shark slowly sinks toward the bottom where it is eaten alive by other fish.
- Shark finning takes place at sea so the fishers have only the fins to transport.
- Any shark is taken-regardless of age, size, or species.
- Longlines, used in shark finning operations, are the most significant cause of losses in shark populations worldwide.
- Shark finning is widespread, and largely unmanaged and unmonitored.
- Shark finning has increased over the past decade due to the increasing demand for shark fins (for shark fin soup and traditional cures), improved fishing technology, and improved market economics.
- Shark specialists estimate that 100 million sharks are killed for their fins, annually.
- One pound of dried shark fin can retail for \$300 or more. It's a multi-billion dollar industry.

Impacts of Shark Finning

- Loss and devastation of shark populations around the world. Experts estimate that within a decade, most species of sharks will be lost because of longlining.
- Unsustainable fishery. The massive quantity of sharks harvested and lack of selection deplete shark populations faster than their reproductive abilities can replenish populations.
- Threatens the stability of marine ecosystems.
- Loss of sharks as a food staple for many developing countries.
- Local waters are invaded by large industrial, foreign fishing vessels that threaten traditional sustainable fisheries.
- Threatens socio-economically important recreational fisheries.
- Wasteful of protein and other shark-based products. Up to 99 per cent of the shark is thrown away.

Are there laws against shark finning?

- Each country with a coastline is responsible for laws and regulations pertaining to fishing in their waters.
- A number of countries have shark-finning legislation. Many stipulate that fins must arrive in a 5 per cent weight ratio of the shark carcasses onboard. Only a few countries demand that sharks arrive in port with fins attached.
- According to the IUCN Shark Specialist group, the easiest way to implement a ban is to require that shark carcasses be landed with fins attached. The possession of fins alone on vessels would thus be illegal.
- Shark finning violates the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- The United Nations Convention on the Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) lists the whale shark, basking shark, and great white shark as species that could become threatened if trade is not controlled. To date, 169 countries have agreed to be legally bound by CITES.

Sources on shark finning:

IUCN Shark Specialist Group. "IUCN Information Paper. Shark Finning." 2003.
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