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The Council positions itself against the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels

The Council adopted a general approach whereby it supports landing of all sharks with their fins attached as proposed by the Commission ([6719/2/12](#)).

The controversial practice of "shark finning" (whereby the fins are removed from sharks, with the remainder of the shark being discarded at sea) has been forbidden on EU fishing vessels since 2003. However, a derogation still persists allowing with special fishing permits the processing on board, whereby shark fins can be removed from the carcasses (landing of fins and the remainder of the shark together or separately). The Commission proposal aims to suppress this derogation which would mean sharks can only be landed with their fins attached.

Sharks, skates and rays are generally very vulnerable to overexploitation due to their life cycle characteristics of slow growth, late maturity and small number of young. In recent years, some shark populations have been severely targeted and put under serious threat as a result of a dramatic increase in demand for shark products, fins in particular. "Shark finning" has increased in recent years largely due to a strong demand for shark fin soup and traditional cures in Asia. While this practice is forbidden in EU waters and on EU vessels, the still possible processing on board has cast doubts about the effectiveness of controls - which relies on carcass-to-fin weight ratios - and impedes the improvement of landing statistics, the latter being necessary to allow for science-based management of shark species.

P R E S S

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In fishery issues, Member State consider that the EU policies should be based on scientific advice. In this case, the Scientific, Technical, and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) has confirmed the appropriateness of a finning ban, and has called for improving the accuracy of landings statistics on sharks; this could be achieved in the most straightforward way by landing sharks together with their fins. The STECF is the scientific body assisting the EU in the implementation of the CFP in the fields of marine biology, marine ecology, fisheries science, fishing gear technology and fishery economics.

The Council now awaits the position in first reading of the European Parliament, before it will formalise its position.
