



Joint Position Statement to the 29th Regular Meeting of the Commission of ICCAT (17-25 November 2025)

SHARKS ON THE EDGE

Global shark populations are facing an unprecedented crisis. Over the past decades, the combined pressures of targeted fishing, bycatch, and international trade in shark products have driven dramatic declines across many species. Recent estimates indicate that fishing-related mortality may have risen to over 100 million sharks annually, including up to 29 million individuals from already threatened species.¹ Yet, most shark populations remain poorly managed and insufficiently monitored within regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), leaving them highly vulnerable to overexploitation.

ICCAT has been a pioneer in recognising its responsibility for Atlantic shark populations and the impact of ICCAT fisheries on shark populations either as a target species in multispecies fisheries, or as an incidental bycatch in tuna fisheries, or in many cases being both.

However, adopting rebuilding plans without implementing effective measures to reduce total mortality to agreed levels, adopting mortality limits for sharks as top predators that are less precautionary than those for tuna and tuna like species, and delaying the start of MSE for valuable commercial blue shark stocks claiming lack of capacity clearly demonstrate that the Commission has so far failed living up to its commitment.

We are also disappointed to see that no proposals have been submitted to continue the discussion of urgent topics for important topics including an increase in Observer Coverage, the adoption of a High Seas Inspection Scheme, improved Port State Measures and other Measures to improve Monitoring, Compliance and Surveillance and combat IUU in the Commission's Area of Competence and ICCAT fisheries.

For the 25th ICCAT Commission Meeting we highlight the following priorities for sharks for the Commission to address

I. For Blue Sharks

Blue sharks are commercially valuable stocks targeted by several CPCs in both, the North and the South Atlantic but not yet managed according to the same standards as tuna and other commercial stocks. In the Mediterranean blue sharks are critically endangered.

¹ Worm et al. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adf8984>

1. **Maintain the previously adopted timeline for the MSE roadmap starting in 2026** and select the cost-effective two-year process with adoption of MPs for both stocks in 2027. Postponing the start of MSE for blue sharks in favour of completion of the Northern Atlantic shortfin mako stock assessment should not be accepted.
2. **Agree on quantitative management objectives** for yield, safety and stability for both stocks of blue sharks while taking a precautionary approach with preferably more precautionary objectives but by no means less precautionary objectives than the ones the Commission had agreed on for North Atlantic swordfish (Rec 24-10).
3. **Urgently improve discard reporting** and incentivise compliance with existing ICCAT Task 1 and Task 2 reporting requirements by making reporting of discards in any given year a prerequisite for quota allowance in the following year(s).
4. **For the Mediterranean Sea intensify improvements in the selectivity of gear** to reduce bycatch of blue sharks in swordfish fisheries and consider a retention ban for blue sharks in the Mediterranean.

II. For Shortfin Mako Sharks

a) North Atlantic

Despite the existing retention ban, mortality levels have continued exceeding the agreed total mortality limit of 250 t substantially and most discarded sharks are discarded dead. Thereby chances for recovery may have deteriorated substantially. However, the Commission has not adopted any additional measures to reduce shortfin mako mortality despite the explicit request for such measures in Rec 21-09.

1. **Urgently adopt additional measures for implementation in 2026** to reduce shortfin mako mortality in compliance with Rec 21-09 independent from the completion of the stock assessment.
2. **Adopt precautionary spatial-temporal closures** of the waters around Cape Verde and the central North Atlantic to longline fishing during summer and to adopt a documented move-on-rule during the remainder of the year in case of high concentrations of catches of shortfin mako sharks in an area.
3. **Consider gear modifications for longlines**, e.g. banning the use of wire traces to reduce catches and to increase chances of survival of shortfin mako shark bycatch; priority to a ban of wire traces should be given in identified areas of high shortfin mako shark bycatch.
4. **Postpone the completion of the stock assessment** until availability of data from the planned age of maturity studies. A stock assessment in 2026 offers no additional value as it may have to be repeated after the age of maturity data becomes available in 2027.

b) South Atlantic

The 2025 stock assessment concluded that the South Atlantic stock has a 50.5% probability of being in the red quadrant of the Kobe Plot, i.e. being overfished and experiencing overfishing, while the probability of being in the green quadrant was only 17.9%. The Scientific Committee recommends reducing total mortality to 1295 t, projecting the stock to recover with a 66% probability not before 2050.²

1. **Reduce the total fishing related mortality** (including retention of dead animals, dead discards and post release mortality of animals released alive) to a level which will allow the

² ICCAT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND STATISTICS (SCRS) (Hybrid/ Madrid (Spain) – 29 September – 3 October 2025); October 2025; https://www.iccat.int/Documents/Meetings/Docs/2025/Reports/2025_SCRS_ENG.pdf; p 86f

stock to recover with a high probability of 60-70% within the next 10-15 years. This faster recovery is imperative considering additional unknowns and risks resulting from climate change, poor reporting compliance, lack of CMS at sea and other poorly understood or hard-to-control uncertainties that could substantially diminish the likelihood of recovery projected by the current stock assessment.

2. **Update Rec 22/11 to close existing loopholes** in reporting requirements and to strengthen compliance with the non-retention measure by certain CPCs.

III. Fins Naturally Attached (FNA) without Exceptions

FNA is globally recognised as the “gold standard” to enforce a ban on shark finning. In contrast to many other RFMOs and RFBs, ICCAT has so far failed to adopt this policy. This year three proposals address Fins Naturally Attached provisions, yet at differing degrees.

1. **Adopt a FNA policy without exceptions** as proposed by PA4 805 and PA4 807 **BUT** include a clear definition of the term “shark” which preferably covers all Chondrichthyes as in WCPFC CMM 2024-05 or at least applies the definition used in IOTC Resolution 25/08, i.e. the eight orders of Selachimorpha (*Carcharhiniformes*, *Lamniformes*, *Orectolobiformes*, *Heterodontiformes*, *Squaliformes*, *Squatinaformes*, *Hexanchiformes*, and *Pristiophoriformes*) and all species of the order of *Rhinopristiformes*, to cover all species vulnerable to finning due to the value of their fins.
2. Reject proposal PA4 804 as it doesn’t reflect best practice and ask the sponsor of the proposal to work with the sponsors of the other proposals.

IV. Improved Consolidation of Conservation and Management Measures for Sharks

Following the Commission’s request to remove redundancies, clarify key obligations, make implementation and compliance monitoring more efficient and reduce the reporting burden on CPCs, two proposals attempt to merge existing Recommendations for sharks into a single, streamlined framework. Unfortunately, both proposals lack an attempt for harmonisation and to remove existing inconsistencies. No best handling and release practices (BHRP) are considered in either of the proposals while such have been established and discussed by other tuna RFMOs and could easily be included in a consolidated shark proposal.

1. **Review and improve proposal PA4 808** to achieve harmonisation of existing exemptions and reporting requirements and remove loopholes to reflect the conservation intent of the existing retention bans.
2. **Harmonise existing exemptions for artisanal fisheries** in developing coastal states for hammerhead sharks and silky sharks to ensure only subsistence fisheries for local consumption are exempted provided measures exist and are enforced to prevent any part of these sharks from entering international markets.
3. **Adopt retention bans for *Cetorhinus maximus* and *Carcharodon carcharias*.**
4. **Consider a retention ban for *Carcharias taurus***, a species known to interact with ICCAT fisheries (SCRS/2025/238).³ Sand tiger sharks are critically endangered and were listed on CMS App I in 2024.
5. **Include endangered *Sphyrna tiburo* into the definition of hammerhead sharks** to prevent retention of other hammerhead sharks reported under the term *Sphyrnidae* using the existing exemption for *Sphyrna tiburo* to undermine the intent of the conservation measure.

³ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 161

6. **Adopt BHRPs as an Appendix** to either a consolidated shark proposal or as a stand-alone measure including minimum standards comparable to those listed by the IOTC WPEB⁴ in 2025 or those compiled by the IATTC scientific staff.⁵
7. Reject Proposal P4 804 and ask its sponsor to work with the sponsor of proposal PA4 808.

V. Maintain FAD Closures

In 2024 the Commission has reduced the duration of the annual FAD closure from 72 days to 45 days ([Rec 24-01](#)) claiming that benefits from the FAD closure on juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna are not clear. In its 2025 meeting the Scientific Committee noted that nearly half of the impact on bigeye tuna spawning stock biomass (SSB) stems from purse seine fishing on floating objects. It also explained that the effects of the recent full closure moratorium are not yet fully visible due to a time lag between reduced juvenile catches and their eventual impact on SSB.⁶

1. **The Commission should await the Scientific Committee's full analysis** and clear scientific advice on the conservation potential of a FAD moratorium.
2. **No further shortening of the annual FAD closure should be considered** until then, while a return to the previous 72-day closure period until then and / or an additional moderate reduction of the number of FADs should be considered in line with a precautionary approach.



Contact Information:

Dr. Iris Ziegler
 Head of Fisheries Policies and Ocean Advocacy
 Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz (DSM)
Iris.ziegler@stiftung-meeresschutz.org
 What's App +49 174 3795190
www.stiftung-meeresschutz.org

Dr. Mona Schweizer
 Head of marine conservation
 Pro Wildlife e.V.
mona.schweizer@prowildlife.de
 +49 159 06314164
www.prowildlife.de

⁴ IOTC-WPEB21(AS) (2025). Report of the 21st Session of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch Assessment Meeting. France and Online, 9 - 13 September 2025; IOTC-2025-WPEB21(AS)-R[E]: 148pp; APPENDIX XXVII

⁵ Melanie Hutchinson, Jon Lopez, Dan Ovando and Marlon Roman; DOCUMENT SAC-16-10 REV UPDATED BEST HANDLING AND RELEASE PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR SHARKS IN IATTC FISHERIES; INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE 16TH MEETING; La Jolla, California (USA) 02-06 June 2025

⁶ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025, p.101

Background Information

B.I. Blue Sharks

Stock status & Discard reporting

South Atlantic: In 2024 no overfishing of the stock occurred versus the agreed TAC of 27,711 t, but between 2017 and 2023 reported mortality levels have exceeded this limit substantially.

North Atlantic: In 2024 no overfishing of the stock occurred versus the agreed TAC of 30,000 t, but by 2024 total fishing related mortality has increased to 24,564 t from 20,963 t in 2021⁷, a substantial increase of more than 3,500 t or almost 15% demonstrating that “paper fish” eventually transforms into increased mortality on the water.

Mediterranean Sea: The stock status remains unknown as compliance with reporting requirements has not improved significantly over the past years and still prevents a meaningful stock assessment. Little to no reporting of discards occurs and no additional measures have been adopted for Mediterranean blue sharks, although blue sharks are classified as critically endangered in the Mediterranean Sea.

Reporting of discards, dead discards and live releases, generally remains very poor resulting in high uncertainty of total mortality, as only very few CPCs having reported blue shark discards at all in the past years.⁸

Development of MSE-tested Management Procedures for the North and the South Atlantic stocks

In 2023, the Commission performed stock assessments and adopted [Rec 23/10](#) and [Rec 23/11](#) for the management of blue sharks in the North and South Atlantic and committed to the long-term sustainable management of both stocks. Both Recommendations tasked the Scientific Committee “[...] by 2025 on the feasibility, cost, options and tentative roadmap for developing an MSE framework (including inter alia HCR with associated limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management” of blue sharks in the ICCAT Convention area.”

According to a procedural roadmap adopted by the Commission in 2024, MSE is to start in 2026 after completion of a feasibility study in 2025. Based on its results (SCRS/2025/078) of this feasibility, the Scientific Committee concluded in 2025 “that MSE development [...] is technically feasible, cost-effective, and aligned with existing ICCAT MSE practices”¹ and implementable in either a two or three-year process. Although the two-year option is feasible and more cost effective, the Committee recommended the three-year option and furthermore postponed the start of the core work to 2027, due to the prioritisation of the completion of the North Atlantic shortfin mako stock assessment in 2026. Thereby Management Procedures would not be adopted prior to 2029.

The Scientific Committee therefore explicitly asks for this year’s Commission Meeting to “provide guidance on this timeline and budget, and to provide the quantitative management objectives for yield, safety, and stability for both blue shark stocks”.⁹

B.II. Shortfin Mako Sharks

a) North Atlantic stock

Stock assessment and stock status

The 2019 stock assessment based on data up to 2015) had concluded a combined 90% probability from all models for the stock being in an overfished state and experiencing overfishing.¹⁰

The projections based on this stock assessment show that even at a total mortality of zero the stock shows only a 53% probability of recovery by 2045. Therefore, the Scientific Committee had recommended a complete retention ban without exception.

Rec.21-09 has adopted a total mortality limit of 250 t and a management objective to rebuild the overfished stock with a 60-70% probability by 2070. Reported fishing related mortality (including landings, dead discards and post release mortality) between 2018 and 2024 has however continued exceeding 250 t by a

⁷ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 81

⁸ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 81

⁹ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 191

¹⁰ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 86

factor of 10 to 5 with total mortality in 2024 still being 1,179 t when using a post-release mortality rate of 29.4% (Domingo *et al.*, 2025).¹¹

The new stock assessment in 2025 could not be completed as the resulting assessment models were not considered suitable for management advice “*due to issues with the data, particularly conflicts between the available abundance indices, as well as the inclusion of new life history scenarios*”.¹²

Mortality Reduction

ICCAT Rec 21/09 tasks the Scientific Committee “*to prioritize research into: identifying mating, pupping and nursery grounds, and other high concentration areas of North Atlantic shortfin mako; options for spatial-temporal measures; mitigation measures (inter alia, gear configuration and modification, deployment options), together with the benefits and disadvantages for the objectives of the rebuilding programme, aimed at further improving stock status;*” Furthermore, Rec 21/09 requires the Scientific Committees to provide “*to the Commission by 2023, and whenever new information becomes available, updated advice on mitigation measures aimed at further reducing shortfin mako mortality.*”

However, once again at last year's Commission Meeting no additional measures were adopted to reduce mortality levels. CPCs responsible for the highest mortality levels objected to discuss any measures until the availability of the 2025 stock assessment.

At the 2025 Scientific Committee Meeting, one of the CPCs presented promising data that could help avoiding or at least reducing the catch of shortfin mako by the adoption of spatial-temporal closures of high abundance areas like those around Cape Verde and in the central North Atlantic during the summer months with little impact on the catch of other species¹³ - a measure in line with the suggestions in Rec 21-09.

Furthermore, a ban of wire traces in longline fisheries, another potential measure to reduce mortality, has been repeatedly discussed at ICCAT, but has not been implemented despite a wide range of scientific data demonstrating the potential of such gear modifications for reducing mortality of vulnerable shark species including shortfin mako sharks.¹⁴

WCPFC adopted a ban of wire traces and shark lines between 20°S and 20°N in its area of competence (CMM 2025/05) and noted the Scientific Committee noted at this year's assessment of oceanic whitetip shark that “*the largest reductions in mortality appear to have resulted from changes in longline fishing practices, suggesting that gear-based mitigation measures have been effective*”.¹⁵ IOTC will ban the use of shark lines from 2026 on and has agreed to ban the use of wire traces by 2028, unless CPCs demonstrate in an experimental, scientific study that mortality of vulnerable shark species of concern is not different for wire traces compared to monofilament leaders. The listed shark species of concern also includes shortfin mako sharks (IOTC Res 25/08).

b) South Atlantic stock

Stock assessment and changes of parameters

The conclusion of the 2025 stock assessment of the stock being overfished and experiencing overfishing with a 50.5% probability is even more concerning since the combined changes in shortfin mako biology (faster growth, much earlier sexual maturity at an age of ~10 years vs. ~ 20 years, and an increased reproductive output) made for this stock assessment result in a substantially higher productivity of the stock compared to the 2017 assessment.¹⁶ Based on studies presented at the 2025 Shortfin Mako Shark Data Preparatory Meeting the biologic parameters were changed for both stocks using the same methodology assuming two band pairs per year up to the age corresponding to the size-at-maturity for each sex,¹⁷ while confirmation of these parameters by comprehensive age of maturity studies will not become available prior to 2027.

The stock assessment model does not support projections of total mortality levels exceeding 2,000 t and the probability of recovery at a mortality of 1,295 t, projecting a probability of 66% for the stock by 2050, drops off to only 34% already for a slightly higher mortality of 1,500 t. Therefore, the suggested total mortality limit of 1,295 t may be subject to a high risk of failure being too close to the limit of the model's ability of

¹¹ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 187

¹² ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 131

¹³ ICCAT SCRS/2025/166 SCRS/2025/078; Báez J.C. et al; Spatial distribution of blue shark and shortfin mako catches in Spanish longline fisheries in the North Atlantic Ocean.

¹⁴ Report of the 20th Session of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch – Data Preparatory meeting Online via Zoom, 22 – 26 April 2024; https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024/05/IOTC-2024-WPEB20DP-RE_0.pdf

¹⁵ WCPFC Stock Assessment of Oceanic Whitetip Shark in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (2025). WCPFC-SC21-2025/SA-WP-08-Rev1 July 2025. <https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/26650>

¹⁶ ICCAT SCRS SMA stock assessment report June 2025 https://www.iccat.int/Documents/Meetings/Docs/2025/Reports/2025_SMA_SA_ENG.pdf

¹⁷ ICCAT SCRS SMA stock assessment report June 2025 p2

projection and especially at such a long-term horizon.¹⁸ These concerns had been raised during the stock assessment meetings and at the Scientific Committee Meeting but are unfortunately not reflected in the Scientific Committee’s recommendations.

Based on a total mortality limit of 1,295 t and a total fishing mortality of 794 t in 2024, using a post-release mortality rate of 29.4% (Domingo *et al.*, 2025), an allocable retention allowance of 506 t is recommended by the Scientific Committee for shortfin mako sharks that are dead upon haul back for 2026.¹⁹

B.III. Fins Naturally Attached (FNA) without exception

Despite broad co-sponsorship for last year’s proposal from an unprecedented number of CPCs and strong leadership from one CPC calling for a plenary vote, ICCAT once again, for 17 years in a row, has failed to advance FNA when the request for a vote was denied.

Many other RFMOs and RFBs (including NAFO, NEAFC, GFCM) have already adopted a Fins Naturally Attached policy, as have many of ICCAT’s members.

In contrast, IOTC succeeded in 2025 adopting [Res 25/08](#), a far-reaching shark proposal that includes Fins Naturally Attached without exceptions for all sharks landed fresh and allows for sharks landed frozen only one out of two alternatives to be used by CPCs for a transition period until 2028. The alternative had to be pre-selected by each CPC by September 2025. Compliance, and enforcement of the measure must be demonstrated annually and in case of non-compliance of a CPC with these reporting requirements the CPC will immediately be bound to Fins Naturally Attached without exceptions.

This year’s proposals PA4 805 and PA4 807, both requiring storing, transshipping and landing **all** sharks with their fins naturally attached and are stand alone proposals applicable to sharks that can be retained and for which full utilisation applies, whereas sharks requiring specific protection by retention bans are rightly not part of these proposals.

PA4 804, however, combines the requirement of Fins Naturally Attached with a consolidation of existing Recommendations for sharks for which retention is not allowed.

This proposal does not require FNA without exceptions, neither for sharks landed fresh nor for sharks landed frozen, although the sponsor at the proposal stated during the 2024 ICCAT Commission Meeting that FNA is already applied by its fisheries for sharks landed fresh.

While the proposal copies most of the provisions from the WCPFC, it fails to include the definition for sharks as applied by [WCPFC CMM 2024-05](#) defining all *Chondrichthyes* as sharks. Instead it offers a substantially limited definition of sharks referring to only 24 species of sharks and rays listed in [Rec 19-01](#), as “elasmobranchs that are oceanic, pelagic, and highly migratory” ICCAT species. Thereby this finning regulation even excludes several species subject to existing retention bans as well as many other sharks reported to interact with ICCAT fisheries, most of them being highly vulnerable to the shark fin trade and finning. In this context it should also be noted that the Scientific Committee has recommended “*modifying the list of shark species included on the ICCAT statistics forms according to SCRS/2025/238*”²⁰ and thereby included a substantial number of additional sharks known to interact with ICCAT fisheries.

B.IV. Consolidation of conservation and management measures for sharks

None of the two proposals is the result of an ICCAT working group that has met intersessionally to harmonise and consolidate the active Recommendations. Instead both proposals are paper exercises that lack harmonisation of existing provisions and reporting requirements, nor are existing loopholes resolved that continue undermining the intent of the conservation measures the Commission has adopted for vulnerable shark species requiring specific protection.

PA4 804 combines [Rec 04-10](#) with the existing prohibitions of retention, transshipment, landing or offering for sale any part or whole carcass taken in the Convention Area in association with ICCAT fisheries. The proposal substantially weakens these active retention bans e.g. by reducing the retention ban for hammerhead sharks from all *Sphyrnidae* except for *Sphyrna tiburo* to only the three species of hammerhead sharks listed in [Rec 19-1](#) i.e. *S. lewini*, *S. mokkaran* and *S. zygaena*. Also, the definition of thresher sharks is limited to only *Alopias superciliosus* and *Alopias vulpinus* while all (three) species of the genus *Alopias spp.* are covered by the active Recommendation. [Rec 09-07](#) requires CPCs to “*strongly endeavour*” ensuring that vessels flying their flag “*do not undertake a directed fishery for species of*

¹⁸ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025; p 87

¹⁹ ICCAT SCRS Report (2025), p. 187f

²⁰ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p. 161

thresher sharks of the genus *Alopias spp.*.” Furthermore, the collection and submission of Task I and Task II data for *Alopias spp.* other than *A. superciliosus* is required. For *Alopias superciliosus* the number of discards and releases must be recorded with indication of status (dead or alive) and reported to ICCAT in accordance with ICCAT data reporting requirements.

PA4 808 applies exclusively to sharks for which active Recommendations prohibit the retention and applies the correct reference to the respective species. Following the recommendation the proposal also adds vulnerable great white sharks (*Carcharodon carcharias*) and endangered basking sharks (*Cetorhinus maximus*) to the list of species whose retention is to be prohibited. Both species are listed on Appendix I of CMS thereby requiring all signatory states and range states not to target or retain these species. Therefore, following the recommendation of the Subcommittee on Ecosystems and Bycatch (SC-ECO), that both basking shark and great white shark should be considered as species of greatest biological vulnerability requiring precautionary management measures for their conservation, the Commission should adopt measures similar to those adopted for mobulid rays and whale sharks in 2024.²¹

Banning the retention of these species in addition to the retention bans ICCAT has adopted for oceanic whitetip sharks (*Carcharhinus longimanus*) and whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*) is in line with the international obligations of many ICCAT CPCs. Thereby, only one CMS App. I species is still missing such urgently needed protection at ICCAT, the critically endangered sand tiger shark (*Carcharias taurus*), which should therefore be at least reviewed by the Scientific Committee at its 2026 meeting whether fulfilling the criteria. In its 2025 meeting the Scientific Committee recommended including the species into the ICCAT statistics forms acknowledging known interaction of ICCAT fisheries with the species.

However, both proposals fail referencing and addressing several important measures although these are included in the active ICCAT Recommendations.

- [Rec 15-06](#) defines that porbeagle sharks must be “promptly release unharmed, to the extent practicable, porbeagle sharks caught in association with ICCAT fisheries when brought alive alongside for taking on board the vessel” however, this is not included in any of the proposals while PA4 808 does reference to the active Recommendation.
- Best handling and release practices (BHRP) are only included for whale sharks, although ICCAT has adopted such practices already for other sharks e.g. in [Rec 21-09](#) and [Rec 22-11](#) for shortfin mako sharks also for these shark species requiring specific conservation efforts. The IATTC scientific staff has presented a list of gear specific and species specific BHRPs²² and the Scientific Committee of WCPFC has already recommended adoption of the list for the next review of [CMM 2024-05](#). The IOTC WPEB has reviewed and consolidated existing BHRPs, including but not limited to the IATTC recommendations for purse seine, longline and gillnet-fisheries for inclusion into [Res 25/08](#).²³
- [Rec 11-08](#) for silky sharks, defines that the prohibition on retention does not apply to CPCs whose domestic law require that all dead fish be landed, but the fishermen cannot draw any commercial profit from such fish and domestic regulations prohibit the targeting silky shark.
- Active recommendations [Rec 11-08](#) on silky sharks and [Rec 10-08](#) on hammerhead sharks both include exemptions from the prohibition for developing coastal states for local consumption if provisions exist to prevent any part of these sharks entering international markets and the Commission is notified about these. However, no definition of artisanal fisheries is provided which also allows (semi)industrial fleets being exempted while clearly exceeding fishing levels for local consumption at an annual reported catch of 700 -800 t of silky sharks, respectively 300 – 400 t of reported hammerhead sharks of which 50-100% are only reported as *Sphyrnidae*.
- Reporting requirements and consequences in case of non-compliance also substantially differ between both Recommendations with [Rec 11-08](#) specifying that exempted fisheries are required not to increase their catches of silky sharks and any CPC that does not report Task I data for silky shark, in accordance with SCRS data reporting requirements, shall be subject to the provisions of paragraph 1 until such data have been reported. [Rec 10-08](#) however, only requires Task 1 data to be reported at the level of the family of *Sphyrnidae* and makes no similar request for the implementation of further mortality reduction measures as require for silky sharks.

²¹ ICCAT MEETING OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECOSYSTEMS AND BYCATCH (SC-ECO) Report (Hybrid/Madrid, Spain, 12-16 May 2025)

²² Melanie Hutchinson, Jon Lopez, Dan Ovando and Marlon Roman; IATTC SAC 16-10 REV; La Jolla, California (USA); 02-06 June 2025 UPDATED BEST HANDLING AND RELEASE PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR SHARKS IN IATTC FISHERIES

²³ IOTC-WPEB21(AS) (2025). Report of the 21st Session of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch Assessment Meeting. France and Online, 9 - 13 September 2025 ; IOTC-2025-WPEB21(AS)-R[E]; APPENDIX XXVII

- Catches reported only at the *Alopias spp.* level exceed 500 t annually and do not include any catches of 110 animals of *Alopias superciliosus* that a small-scale Mexican coastal fishery is allowed to retain in exemption from [Rec 09-07](#), but has never reported any such catches over the last 15 years.

Based on all of this and as no measures have been reported to prevent entry of retained silky sharks and hammerhead sharks in the international trade and how these measures are enforced the need for an harmonisation and alignment of existing retention bans is clearly needed but requires discussions with stakeholders and the respective CPCs how this could best be achieved for the benefit of both, shark conservation and the needs of developing coastal CPCs.

B.V. FAD closures

Although there has already been substantial debate and controversial views on the effectiveness and benefits of FAD closure on yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks during the 2024 Commission Meeting a reduction of the duration of the annual FAD closure from 72 days to 45 days was adopted the Commission considered benefits from the FAD closure on juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna are not clear.

However, in its 2025 meeting the Scientific Committee highlighted that “currently, almost 50% of the impacts on SSB of bigeye tuna are associated with purse seine fishing on floating objects [...]” The Committee also noted that the “expected effects of the recent full closure moratorium (e.g. reduced PS-FOB catches) on SSB are not fully reflected in the impact analysis”, because there is a lag between reduced catches of younger bigeye tuna on floating objects, and the impact on spawning stock biomass. This impact pattern differs from the proportion of catches in weight by fishery type because of their selectivity.”²⁴

Furthermore, initial model results from the POSEIDON-EAO model also “suggest that reducing active FAD limits to moderate levels could lower ecological risks for juvenile bigeye by reducing reliance on FAD sets, while maintaining overall tuna catches at levels comparable to the current active FAD limit and proposed TAC”.²⁵ Therefore, a further reduction of the number of FADs per vessel, below the designated 288 FADs per vessel in 2026 and 2027 ([Rec 24-01](#)) should also be considered.

Besides the impact of a FAD moratorium on bigeye tuna and yellowfin tuna stocks also the impact on vulnerable bycatch species, such as juvenile silks sharks and critically endangered oceanic whitetip sharks should also be considered. Any reduced setting on FADs by enforcing an annual FAD closure over a consecutive time will help reducing silky shark and oceanic whitetip shark bycatch and thereby have a beneficial conservation impact on these sharks. Both species are known to associate with FADs and especially juvenile silky sharks constitute a substantial bycatch, that has been reported to exceed 100,000 animals per year in the Indian Ocean²⁶ while ICCAT’s publicly available nominal catch information on the website shows between 374 and 32 t of dead discarded silky sharks in purse seine fisheries between 2017 and 2023 for the two main purse seine fleets alone.²⁷ These discards are neither consistent over years nor plausible as not all fleets have reported dead discards for all years and thereby adding to the common issue of poor compliance with reporting obligations of shark discards. Juvenile silky sharks are subject to high at vessel and post release mortality resulting in an overall mortality of 80 – 95%.^{28, 29, 30} Therefore, avoidance and minimisation measures are the most effective mitigation for these sharks out of the bycatch mitigation hierarchy.

While ICCAT has not adopted minimum requirements for handling and best release practices for sharks (except for whale sharks) in purse seine fisheries technical measures exist and handling recommendations have been reported to be effective when combined to reduce at vessel and post release mortality in fleets that have adopted these already on a voluntary basis.^{31, 32}

²⁴ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025, p 192

²⁵ ICCAT SCRS Report 2025 p 101

²⁶ Ziegler I.; IOTC-2022-WPEB18-29_rev1 CARCHARINUS FALCIFORMIS - A MASSIVE BYCATCH IN THE INDUSTRIAL PURSE SEINE INDUSTRY BUT SYSTEMATICALLY UNDERREPORTED AND DEPRIVED OF ANY PROTECTION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN; IOTC 2022 WPEB, https://iotc.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022/09/IOTC-2022-WPEB18-29_rev1_-_FAL_bycatch_in_the_Indian_Ocean_PS_fisheries.pdf

²⁷ ICCAT website; <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrjoiNzFmYTg4NmEtNDhjNy00NWUxLThhZjYtNzRjMm14MjIjODUwLWliwidCj6ljQzYVWUxY2NmLTA0NGYtNDExMjY1hNzUwLWZjNlWQ2NjAwMTImYSIsImMiOi9> Assessed on 09.11.2025;

²⁸ Clavereau, L. et al. (2020). Elasmobranch bycatch distributions and mortality: Insights from the European tropical tuna purse-seine fishery. *Global Ecology and Conservation*. 24.

²⁹ Eddy, F. et al. 2016. Rates of at-vessel mortality and post-release survival of pelagic sharks captured with tuna purse seines around drifting fish aggregating devices (FADs) in the equatorial eastern Pacific Ocean. *Fish. Res.* 174: 109–117.

³⁰ Hutchinson, M. et al. 2015. Post-release survival of juvenile silky sharks captured in tropical tuna purse seine fishery. *Marine Ecology Progress Series*. 521: 143–154

³¹ Onandia Inigo, Maitane Grande, José Maria Galaz, Jon Uranga, Nerea Lezama-Ochoa, Jefferson Murua, Jon Ruiz, Igor Arregui, Hilario Murua, Josu Santiago. New assessment on accidentally captured silky shark post-release survival in the Indian Ocean tuna purse seine fishery. IOTC-2021-WPEB17(DP)-13_Rev1

³² Murua et al., 2025. New best handling and release practice guide for vulnerable bycatch tropical species in tropical tuna purse seiners ([IOTC-2025-WPEB21\(AS\)-35](#)) and Grande M. et al.; Silky shark post-release survival in the Atlantic Ocean tropical tuna purse seine fishery: A baseline for Best Handling and Release Practices; SCRS/2025/110
