



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS
OF FISHING ENTERPRISES IN THE EU

Brussels, 16 November 2019

Europêche position on ICCAT negotiations 2019
Shark species management

Shark management

Europêche proposes to amend ICCAT's conservation measure concerning the '*Conservation of Sharks caught in Association with Fisheries Managed by ICCAT [Rec. 04-10]*' to prohibit shark finning - which is the practice of removing fins from a shark's body with the retention of fins while the body is discarded - and to require that all fins of any shark caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT remain naturally attached until the point of first landing.

The above would allow for better species identification of sharks and contribute to the conservation of sharks within the ICCAT area, which is consistent with United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) resolutions on sustainable fisheries adopted annually since 2007.

Shortfin mako

While 60% of the catches are caught by the EU fleet, Europêche notes that, since adoption of ICCAT management measures in 2017, there has been a significant reduction in catches close to 40% by the Spanish surface longline fleets which have gone through considerable efforts to achieve this reduction and assess the impact, including the installation of electronic monitoring systems and take an increased number of human observers on board.

If the SCRS advice recommending a total prohibition of retention is followed, it would not contribute at all to the improvement of the stock. Moreover, the only reliable source of data, which comes from the reporting provided by the EU fleet, would be totally lost. This lack of data would constrain the activity, in future evaluations, as a consequence of the constant application of the "precautionary approach". In addition, the SCRS advice would translate in an immediate closure of the fishery with huge negative socio-economic consequences for the longline fleets.

In this context, Europêche supports the continuity of the current measures, i.e. the retention on board of mako sharks that arrive dead on the side of the ship, according to the weight assigned to each vessel. This measure shall be conditioned to an increase of the presence of scientific human and/or electronic observers on board, and more effective control of other non-EU fleets that also capture this species. Europêche also encourages CPCs to explore complementary measures, which may be more effective for the management of the mako shark fishery.

Europêche considers fundamental to fine tune the assessment in 2020 for which it is necessary to perform a full new evaluation as the present is not coherent with previous advices in terms of perception of the stock plus the data and methodology used in the previous SCRS advice are not considered to be accurate and reliable due to bias in relation to analysis of CPUE from Chinese Taipei fleet.

Blue shark

Europêche notes that the Northern stock of blue shark is not overfished and that overfishing is not occurring, even if there is uncertainty on the assessment. The blue shark fishery therefore represents a sustainable fishing activity. In this sense, the Spanish fleet, together with other actors involved, such as the marketing sector, NGOs and the National Administration, have developed and implemented a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP), that will allow a substantial improvement of the fishery, and which should also be taken into account.

However, the lack of effective monitoring systems and sufficient control of non-EU fleets create a risk of overexploitation. On top of this, these fleets have recently increased their level of catches.

Europêche encourage CPCs to explore the possibility to allocate catch limits in terms of a compulsory TAC for the Northern stock of blue shark which shall be shared between the main CPCs according to the average historical record of catches declared by these countries.

Europêche advocates consistent management and regulatory measures to be similarly applied to the Southern stock, so the fishery can be adequately controlled and significant increase on catches prevented due to lack of management measures.