

**EUROPÊCHE STATEMENT CONCERNING THE CONSERVATION OF SHARKS CAUGHT IN
ASSOCIATION WITH FISHERIES MANAGED BY ICCAT**

PA4 807/ 2021

Shark management

Europêche supports the recommendation submitted by many CPCs to **prohibit the removal of shark fins at sea** and to **require that all fins remain naturally attached (fully or partially) until the point of first landing**. The EU sector reminds that this is already mandatory in several countries, including in the EU, and in some RFMOs.

The approval of the Recommendation on the conservation of short fin mako (PA4-809 / 2021) should be linked as a *conditio sine qua non* to the approval and strict compliance with Rec. PA4-807.

PA4-809 / 2021

North Atlantic Shortfin mako

Europêche notes that the mako shark is not in danger of extinction in the North Atlantic.

Europêche recalls that due to the inclusion of this species under CITES Appendix II, the Spanish and Portuguese governments have decided not to allow the commercialization of mako caught in international waters (outside national EEZs) of the North Atlantic.

Since the adoption of ICCAT management measures in 2017, the Spanish pelagic longline fleets, conscious of the need to rebuild the stock, **reduced the catches by almost 40%** and proactively seek the avoidance of catches on a voluntary basis. This effort, which included the installation of electronic monitoring systems and an increased number of human observers on board, was difficult, costly and was made even before the Recommendation 19-06 was adopted.

The efforts from the EU fleet did not stop there. In addition to the strict compliance with ICCAT's recommendations, the sector launched in 2018 a Fishing Improvement Project for the Swordfish and Blue Shark Fisheries (FIP BLUES) promoted by 4 producer organizations and 13 companies, which represent 90% of the catches of the EU fleet. One of the main objectives of the FIP is to address and propose solutions to solve the gaps of information and data for fishing-related species, i.e. mako shark. Under this programme, skippers collect and report on a voluntary basis in the e-logbook additional information such as the number of individuals discarded (dead or alive), catch areas, sex of the specimen, etc.

Discarding dead specimens does not make sense from different angles. As recognised by the SCRS, a **total retention ban would bring no conservation benefits for the stock and would be a wasteful practice**. The only reliable source of data, which comes from the reporting provided by the EU fleet, would be totally lost and lead to the constant application of the "precautionary approach". Landings are one of the parameters on which the SCRS estimates are based. In addition, it would bring about tremendous negative socio-economic consequences for the longline fleets. Furthermore, returning a dead fish to the sea, and not taking advantage of that source of healthy protein, is to encourage food waste.

In this context, Europêche supports the compulsory release of all makos that are alive when brought along the boat. However, it is important to maintain the **continuity of the retention on board of mako sharks that arrive dead to the vessel**. This possibility must be strongly conditioned to data collection/reporting, an increase of the presence of human or electronic

observers on board and management measures such as the identification of spawning areas or avoidance of areas of high concentration of individuals. Furthermore, Spain only allows the catch of two individuals per fishing trip per vessel. This aimed at continuing to improve knowledge, management and the recovery of the fish species. ICCAT should pay particular attention and take urgent measures against CPCs not complying with ICCAT's recommendations. The following principle should apply: **"no data, no fishing"**.

Europêche also advocates the establishment of a **TAC of at least 500t for all CPCs involved in the fishery**. A 0 TAC would be illogical and counterproductive for the reasons explained above.

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Recommendation on by-catch of sea turtles - G Hooks

Europêche simply fails to understand why some CPCs propose the mandatory use of G hooks. If reducing bycatch is a key priority for all the CPCs, it makes no sense introducing a fishing method that actually increases by-catches. The authors of this proposal even recognise that studies have extensively documented that **circle hooks increase catch rates of sharks, particularly shortfin mako**.