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## **Opinion 102 relating to the on-board processing of pelagic sharks**

EU Regulation 1185/2003, on the removal of fins, must, under Article 6.2 of this same regulation, be reviewed during 2016. This review should take the form of a report by the European Commission to the co-legislators.

In this context, the SWW AC intends to recall its general position with respect to finning, give feedback on experiences regarding certain issues surrounding these surface fisheries, and finally, issue new recommendations regarding the on-board removal of shark fins.

### Summary of basic principles:

\* SWW AC members are unanimously opposed to the practice of fishing for surface sharks for the sole or main purpose of the resale of shark fins, resulting in the non-use of shark bodies.

\* These members wish all efforts be continued at international level in order that such practices be permanently banned.

### Findings:

Nearly 10 years after the adoption of the first Community regulation on this issue, a review of Regulation 1185/2003 was organised in the early 2010s. In this context it has transpired that the provisions to ensure proper compliance with the ban on finning have led to complications, particularly regarding dispensatory practices.

These dispensatory practices were made illegal, with partial slicing remaining the only way to facilitate accommodation of sharks on board.

This regulatory change has had several adverse consequences for various activities:

- The ban on the removal of fins on board made it impossible for fins to be used as bait, aboard the same ships. It has been estimated that 8 tonnes of wild fish are required in replacement for this during a single tide.
- Disallowing the removal of fins on board has also led to more space being required on ships, leading to the less efficient use of tides, both for fishing businesses and the crew.
- Energy costs and the negative environment impact at similar production levels have also increased.
- In addition it has been found that the safety of crews has been affected when handling whole sharks, with some fins being extremely sharp.
- In terms of food safety, the removal of fins on land, in the case of vessels engaged in freezing on board, increases health risks



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### Recommendation:

The SWW AC therefore stresses that it may be beneficial for many reasons to authorise the removal of shark fins on board fishing vessels once again and, more generally, to authorise their traditional on-board processing, as follows:



In addition, the SWW AC proposes new measures to ensure that finning does not take place:

- Authorising the removal and use of fins on board, provided that as many collars with the 7 fins of the same shark as shark bodies are landed.



- Authorising the removal and use of fins on board, provided that as many packets of fins of the same shark as shark bodies are landed.



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The general principle for monitoring this adaptation of the regulation would therefore be based on the monitoring of the number of unloaded trunks and number of collars / packets. Moreover, we recall that it is the throwing away of bodies of surface sharks that is reprehensible, not the reverse. It would therefore be desirable, if it is possible to introduce regulatory adjustments, that the landing of a lower number of fins than surface shark bodies be authorised, due to various practices on board.

The SWW AC also recommends once again that all possible efforts be made through the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to ensure that the ban on finning internationally is truly effective.

#### Minority opinion:

Environmental NGOs strongly support the current ban (2013) on fishing for fins established by the EU, which requires that all sharks be landed with their fins naturally attached. The adoption of this measure has filled gaps in the old EU policy, which made the detection of fishing for fins extremely difficult. Scientists specialised in fisheries consider the method requiring the landing of sharks with fins naturally attached to be the simplest and most effective to prevent fishing for fins. It also helps to collect valuable data on shark catches more easily, as it is easier to identify species of sharks when their fins are still attached.

NGOs support DG MARE and all stakeholders involved in working together through RFMOs to take action in favour of this method at an international level and in adopting genuine multiannual plans for the commercial fishing of sharks in the EU, such as those provided for under the current CFP.