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## **"Shark finning": the Council takes position with the European Parliament against this practice**

The Permanent Representatives Committee endorsed today the Council position following the European Parliament's first reading of the Commission proposal regarding the landing of all sharks with their fins attached ([17486/11](#)). The Committee accepted all the amendments voted by the European Parliament in first reading.

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 remains in force that allows special fishing permits to be issued for on-board processing, whereby shark fins can be removed from the carcasses (with the fins and the remainder of the shark being landed together or separately). The Commission proposal aims to eliminate this derogation so that sharks can only be landed with their fins attached.

Sharks, skates and rays are generally very vulnerable to overexploitation owing 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, and fins in particular which are used in soups and traditional cures in Asia. While the practice of shark finning is forbidden in EU waters and on EU vessels, the fact that on-board processing is still possible has cast doubts on the effectiveness of controls - which rely on carcass-to-fin weight ratios - and hinders improved landing statistics, the latter being necessary to allow for science-based management of shark species. With its policy of fins remaining attached, the EU will better be able to push shark protection also at the international level.

# **P R E S S**

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The Member States consider that EU fisheries policies should be based on scientific advice. In this specific case, the Scientific, Technical, and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) has confirmed the appropriateness of a finning ban, and has called for more accurate shark landings statistics; the most straight-forward way to achieve this is by landing sharks together with their fins. The STECF is the scientific body that assists the EU in the implementation of the CFP in the fields of marine biology, marine ecology, fisheries science, fishing gear technology and fishery economics.

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