

Stop Finning – Stop the Trade!

Every year, between 63 and 273 million sharks die as a result of fishing.^[1] This is likely an underestimate, as there is a lack of reliable data and the worldwide number of unreported cases of illegal fishing is extremely high. Sharks are hunted worldwide, primarily because of their fins. These are eaten especially in the Asian region as shark fin soup. you can be charged up to 90€ for this supposed delicacy, which contains only a few grams of fins.^[2] A lucrative business with huge profit margins at the expense of the sharks!

The fins are often collected in a cruel way by “finning”. Finning means that the sharks’ fins are cut off at sea whilst the animal may still be alive. The remainder of the shark gets thrown overboard because their meat is almost worthless compared to the fins. Without fins the sharks sink to the seabed where they suffocate, bleed to death or are eaten alive.

This shark fin business is also supplied from Europe.

Since 2013, the “Fins Naturally Attached” regulation of the European Union prohibits without exception the storage, transshipment and landing of all shark fins in EU waters and on all EU ships. The fins must remain naturally attached to the carcass when the ship is unloaded in port. The fins can then be separated from the animal and exported to Asia.

In 2016 alone, Spain officially landed 53,000 tons of blue shark, equivalent to approximately 1,75 million animals.^[3] Despite the increasing threat^[4], for example the total catch of blue sharks in the Atlantic has almost doubled since the beginning of the millennium. In addition, other shark species, some of which are more endangered, such as the short-finned mako shark and the porbeagle are hunted in Europe.

This catch is worthwhile almost entirely because of the fins. On average, just under 3,500 tonnes of fins, with a total value of around 52 million euros^[5], are exported from the EU each year. As a result of sporadic inspections of fishing vessels at sea, nobody can say with certainty how many shark fins are still illegally landed in Europe.^[6]

The situation in the global shark fin trade is even more disturbing. Only a few countries have passed a “Fins Naturally Attached” law (e.g. USA, Canada, India, South Africa). In many countries finning is still allowed. Therefore, there is still a huge volume of fins on the global market, whose origin is rarely traceable.^[8] However, these can still be traded legally in and across Europe.

That is why we request: The trade with shark fins in Europe must end immediately!

The barbaric practice of shark finning can only be stopped once regulation of the trade makes it financially impractical. The “Fins Naturally Attached” regulation in the European Union must be extended to the export, import and transit of sharks and rays.

The current Fins Naturally Attached Regulation states: “Sharks are not a traditional European food, but they are a necessary element of European marine ecosystems”. It is time to finally take consistent action in Europe to protect sharks and our oceans! Therefore, we ask you to support this opportunity to extend legislation in the European Union to protect our seas.

Support us at www.stop-finning.eu