

Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 of 26 June
2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 37 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament⁽²⁾,

Whereas:

- (1) According to Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy⁽³⁾, the Common Fisheries Policy shall ensure exploitation of living aquatic resources that provides sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions, and the Council is to establish Community measures governing access to waters and resources and the sustainable pursuit of fishing activities.
- (2) Fish belonging to the taxon *Elasmobranchii*, which includes sharks, skates, rays and similar species are generally very vulnerable to exploitation due to their life-cycle characteristics. Most of these species are often caught as by-catch in Community fishing activities directed to other more valuable species.
- (3) Current scientific knowledge, generally based on the examination of catch rates, indicates that many stocks of sharks are seriously under threat.
- (4) Until more is known about the population dynamics of sharks and their response to exploitation, which would allow the drafting of well-tailored and comprehensive management plans, any measure preventing the development of unsustainable practices or leading to decreased exploitation of sharks will have positive effects on their conservation.
- (5) The practice of 'shark finning', whereby the fins are removed from sharks, with the remainder of the shark being discarded at sea, may contribute to the excessive mortality of sharks to such an extent that many stocks of sharks are depleted, and their future sustainability may be endangered.
- (6) Measures to restrict or prevent the further development of the practice of shark finning are urgently required, and the removal of shark fins on board vessels should therefore be prohibited. In view of the practical difficulties involved in the identification of species

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based on removed fins, this prohibition should apply to all *Elasmobranchii*, except for the removal of ray wings.

- (7) However, the removal of fins from dead sharks on board may be allowed if the removal aims at a more efficient use of all shark parts by the separate processing on board of fins and of the remaining parts of the sharks. In this case, the flag Member State should issue and manage, with associated conditions, a special fishing permit in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1627/94 of 27 June 1994 laying down general provisions concerning special fishing permits⁽⁴⁾.
- (8) In order to ensure that all the remaining parts of sharks are kept on board, after the removal of fins, masters of vessels which hold a valid special fishing permit should keep records of the amounts of shark fins and of the remaining parts of sharks after evisceration and beheading. Such records should be kept in the logbook as provided for by Council Regulation (EEC) No 2847/93 of 12 October 1993 establishing a control system applicable to the common fisheries policy⁽⁵⁾, or in a special register as appropriate.
- (9) The problems resulting from the practice of shark finning extend well beyond Community waters. It is appropriate that the Community shows equal commitment towards stock conservation in all maritime waters. This Regulation should therefore be applicable to all Community vessels.
- (10) In accordance with the principle of proportionality, it is necessary and appropriate for the achievement of the basic objective of conservation of shark stocks to lay down rules on the removal of shark fins on board vessels. This Regulation does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve the objectives pursued in accordance with the third paragraph of Article 5 of the Treaty,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Scope

This Regulation shall apply to the removal of shark fins, retention on board, transshipment and landing of sharks or shark fins:

1. by vessels in maritime waters under the sovereignty or the jurisdiction of Member States;
2. by vessels flying the flag or registered in Member States in other maritime waters.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Regulation, the following definitions shall apply:

1. 'shark fins' means any fins of sharks including caudal fins, but excluding the pectoral fins of rays, which are a constituent part of raywings;

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2. 'shark' means any fish of the taxon *Elasmobranchii*;

3. ^[F1]]

Textual Amendments

F1 Deleted by [Regulation \(EU\) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels.](#)

Article 3

Prohibitions

1 It shall be prohibited to remove shark fins on board vessels, and to retain on board, tranship or land shark fins.

^[F2]1a Without prejudice to paragraph 1, in order to facilitate on-board storage, shark fins may be partially sliced through and folded against the carcass, but shall not be removed from the carcass before landing.]

2 It shall be prohibited to purchase, offer for sale or sell shark fins which have been removed on board, retained on board, transhipped or landed in contravention of this Regulation.

Textual Amendments

F2 Inserted by [Regulation \(EU\) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels.](#)

^{F1}*Article 4*

^[F1]Derogation and associated conditions

Textual Amendments

F1 Deleted by [Regulation \(EU\) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels.](#)

^{F1}*Article 5*

Records]

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Textual Amendments

- F1** Deleted by [Regulation \(EU\) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels.](#)

I^{F3} Article 6

Reports

1 Where vessels flying the flag of a Member State catch, retain on-board, tranship or land sharks, the flag Member State, in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy⁽⁶⁾ and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 404/2011 of 8 April 2011 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009⁽⁷⁾, shall send to the Commission, annually, by 1 May, a comprehensive report on its implementation of this Regulation during the previous year. The report shall describe the monitoring by the flag Member State of compliance with this Regulation by its vessels in Union and non-Union waters, and the enforcement measures it has taken in cases of non-compliance. In particular, the flag Member State shall provide all of the following information:

- the number of landings of sharks,
- the number, date and place of the inspections that have been carried out,
- the number and nature of cases of non-compliance detected, including a full identification of the vessel(s) involved and the penalty applied for each case of non-compliance, and
- the total landings by species (weight/number) and by port.

2 After the submission by Member States of their second annual report in accordance with paragraph 1, the Commission shall, by 1 January 2016, report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the operation of this Regulation and the international developments in this field.]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Substituted by [Regulation \(EU\) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels.](#)

Article 7

Entry into force

This Regulation shall enter into force on the 60th day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

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- (1) [OJ C 331 E, 31.12.2002, p. 121.](#)
- (2) Opinion delivered on 27 March 2003 (not yet published in the Official Journal).
- (3) [OJ L 358, 31.12.2002, p. 59.](#)
- (4) [OJ L 171, 6.7.1994, p. 7.](#)
- (5) [OJ L 261, 20.10.1993, p. 1.](#) Regulation as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 806/2003 ([OJ L 122, 16.5.2003, p. 1.](#)).
- (6) [^{F3}[OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.](#)]
- (7) [^{F3}[OJ L 112, 30.4.2011, p. 1.](#)]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Substituted by [Regulation \(EU\) No 605/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 amending Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels.](#)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- Art. 1 substituted by [2023 c. 22 s. 2](#)
- Art. 1 substituted by [S.I. 2019/753 reg. 14\(2\)](#)
- Art. 6 substituted by [S.I. 2019/753 reg. 14\(3\)](#)
- Art. 7 omitted by [S.I. 2019/753 reg. 14\(4\)](#)