

Fish stock conservation: prohibition of removing fins of sharks on board vessels

2002/0198(CNS) - 26/06/2003 - Final act

PURPOSE : to lay down measures restricting the practice of shark finning. **COMMUNITY MEASURE** : Council Regulation 1185/2003/EC on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels. **CONTENT** : 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. Current scientific knowledge, generally based on the examination of catch rates, indicates that many stocks of sharks are seriously under threat. 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 shark are depleted and their sustainability endangered. This Regulation prohibits the removal of shark fins on board vessels and the retention on board of shark fins, their transshipment or landing. It also prohibits the purchase, offer for sale or selling of shark fins, which have been removed on board, retained, transhipped or landed as above. There are, however, derogations: - 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 1627/94EC. - 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 must 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 2847/93/EC establishing a control system applicable to the common fisheries policy, or in a special register as appropriate. This Regulation applies to vessels in maritime waters under the sovereignty or the jurisdiction of Member States as well as to vessels flying the flag or registered in Member States in other maritime waters. **ENTRY INTO FORCE** : 02/09/03.