

Stepping up Management and Conservation  
of Sharks at Tuna RFMOs

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## DRIVING CHANGE TOGETHER

Robust Management Procedures  
for commercially exploited Sharks  
&  
Effective Reduction of  
Bycatch Mortality

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## Low Fecundity, late sexual Maturity & high Overlap with Commercial Tuna Fisheries make pelagic Sharks most vulnerable to Overexploitation

- Pelagic sharks are a major bycatch in all RFMO fisheries targeting tuna and tuna like species<sup>1</sup>
- Stock status of most pelagic shark populations is either unknown or outcomes of stock assessments are highly uncertain, while non-compliance with reporting requirements continues
- Oceanic shark populations have been reduced by more than 70% of their preindustrial biomass over the course of the last 50 years due to industrial fishing<sup>2</sup>.
- Global shark mortality has further increased to 79 million (in 2017) between 2012 and 2019 and to likely 101 million sharks in 2019 including 22 - 29 million of threatened species - despite widespread legislation adopted to prevent shark finning<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Mucientes et al. 2023 ; Swimmer et al. 2020 ; Coelho et al 2019 ; Wosnick et al 2022 ; Juan-Jorda et al. 2022 ember 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023

<sup>2</sup> Pacoureaux et al. 2021

<sup>3</sup> Worm et al 2024

## Blue Sharks are still considered „Bycatch“ at Tuna RFMOs

- Blue sharks account globally for more than 60% ~~of~~ all shark catches
- Global value of blue shark fishery in 2019 was 411 Mio US \$<sup>1</sup> and thus bigger than any of the three blue fin tuna stocks
- IUCN: globally “near threatened” BUT “critically endangered” in the Mediterranean.
- Blue sharks are rated as highly vulnerable in the EPO by the EASI-FISH<sup>1</sup> approach
- Targeted by many industrial and artisanal fleets, and also by EU fleets in all t-RFMOs
- Total mortality remains highly uncertain in most area as only few CPCs report discards
- Since November 2023 blue sharks have been CITES App II listed and now require an NDF for introduction from the sea and the international trade

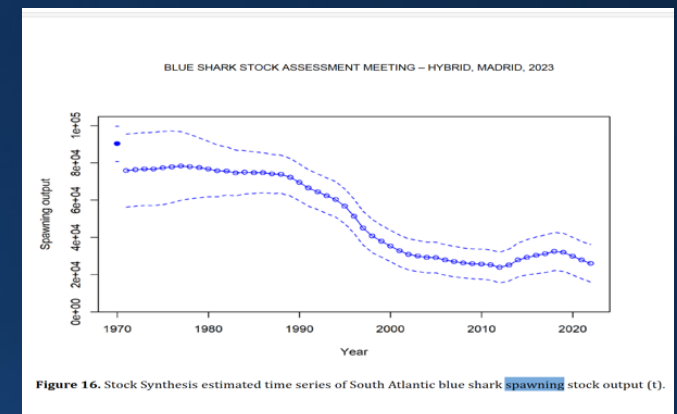
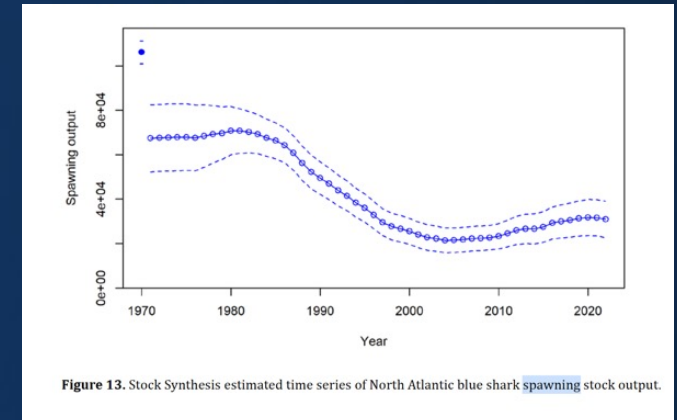
# Wins & Losses for Blue Sharks at Tuna RFMOs in 2023

## ICCAT

- ! 2023 stock assessment in the Atlantic showed spawning biomass has decreased substantially over the last 50 years<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ (Rec 23/10 & Rec 23/11)
- ✓ TACs and quotas were adopted for North and South Atlantic
- ✓ ICCAT agreed in 2023 that the “SCRS shall inform the Commission, by 2025 on the feasibility, cost, options and tentative roadmap for developing an MSE framework (including inter alia HCR with the associated limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management of this stock in the ICCAT Convention area”
- ! **BUT** TAC for North Atlantic provides less than 60% probability for stock being in the “green” quadrant before 2029.<sup>1</sup>

## IOTC, IATTC & WCPFC

- ! No measures exist at any other tuna RFMO



# RFMOs and CPCs infringe UN Fish Stocks Agreement and may be in conflict with CITES requirements for NDFs

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## Legal Opinion "Untangling the Net of 'Bycatch' in Commercial Shark Fisheries: The Interplay between International Fisheries Law and CITES"

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- Shark species that represent a substantial commercial value when caught and landed (commercially exploited) should be treated as (secondary) target species and NOT as bycatch, especially when listed on CITES App II
- Tuna RFMOs thus should manage these species via science based, precautionary, and effective management measures to justify sustainable removals.
- This applies globally to blue sharks and shortfin mako, but also to other targeted shark species (e.g. silky sharks at IOTC and IATTC)



*Prionace glauca*



@Heinz Toperczer

- Tasking Scientific Committees to develop MSE frameworks (including inter alia, candidate HCR with the associated candidate limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management of blue shark stocks at all RFMOs.
- Limit Reference Points (LRPs) for blue sharks must be at least as precautionary as those for target tuna species.
- All TACs must be allocated between CPCs ensuring equitable allocation
- Ensure compliance with reporting requirements for sharks at species level, including full reporting of discards.

## 2024 Agenda for Blue Sharks: Recommendations to the Commission

**IOTC:** a new shark proposal based on last year's proposal from Maldives including management procedures for blue sharks

- Catch limits and quotas taking a precautionary approach in view of the high uncertainty of total mortality
- **Plus:** by 2025 the SC should provide the Commission with options and a tentative roadmap for developing harvest strategies (including inter alia, candidate HCR with the associated candidate limit, target and threshold reference points, etc.) for the management of this stock in the IOTC Convention area

**IATTC:** a proposal for management procedures for blue sharks

- Building on IATTC scientific staff's EASI FISH vulnerability ranking of blue sharks and shark proposals submitted by Canada and Ecuador in 2023

**WCPFC:** starting to develop LRPs for blue sharks

- SC should not accept lower LRPs and a higher level of risk for non-targeted species.
- Align with other CPCs for submission of a proposal

## The Commission's Promise in 2023

*to “step up EU’s efforts in regional fisheries management bodies to adopt new and/or to strengthen and effectively implement current conservation and management measures for shark species, as well as to assess the effectiveness of the measures adopted and strengthen control measures to ensure current rules are properly applied and enforced.”<sup>1</sup>*

- Allocated catch limits and robust management procedures for commercially exploited sharks at all t-RFMOs, not just at ICCAT
- Effective management procedures ensure sustainable management of stocks and support science-based NDFs from member states
- Effective management procedures maintain stocks in the “green” and avoid retention bans.
- Management procedures and equitable allocation increase credibility of EU’s position in negotiations for catch reductions
- Fins Naturally Attached without exemptions is the only effective way to prevent “Finning”.
- Bycatch mortality of non-retained sharks needs to be lowered effectively.

Sustainable shark management ensures healthy stocks, supports healthy oceans, and provides long-term income and economic benefits for ALL - fisheries & communities alike - for EU and other CPCs, including those in the Global South



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## Other Shark Stocks lacking Management at RFMOs

### Shortfin Mako Sharks

- **ICCAT:** retention ban in place for North Atlantic and TAC with allocated quota apply in the South Atlantic
- **IOTC, WCPFC, IATTC:**  
**no catch limits exist**, although mako sharks are targeted together with blue sharks by industrial fisheries

### Silky Sharks

- **WCPFC & ICCAT:**  
retention bans in place **but exemptions for artisanal fisheries**
- **IATTC:** **“limits” bycatch of silky sharks per trip to 20% by weight of tuna catch**  
otherwise mandatory ban on wire traces and shark lines applies for three months
- **IOTC:** **no management measures exist**, although silky sharks are actively targeted by several fleets

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## Other Shark Stocks lacking Management at RFMOs

### Thresher Sharks

- IOTC: retention ban in place for all 3 species **but exemptions for coastal fisheries**
- ICCAT: retention ban in place only for bigeye thresher sharks

### Hammerhead Sharks

- ICCAT: retention ban in place (except for *Sphyrna tiburo*), **but exemptions for developing coastal states for local consumption**
- IOTC, WCPFC, IATTC:  
**no management measures exist**, although hammerhead sharks are actively targeted by several fleets

### Oceanic whitetip Sharks

- All t-RFMOs have banned retention **but exemptions apply for coastal & artisanal fisheries**

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*THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR SHARED INTEREST  
FOR HEALTHY OCEANS*



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