

EU agrees crack down on shark finning

March 19 2012



British performance artist Alice Newstead protests against shark finning in the window of a London shop. The European Union endorsed tighter shark fishing rules on Monday to ensure fishermen respect a ban on slicing off the fins of their catches and throwing the live body overboard to drown. The European Union endorsed tighter shark fishing rules on Monday.

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The EU has prohibited shark finning since 2003, but an exemption allows [fishermen](#) with special permits to remove the fins from their carcass out at sea and bring back the remainders together or land them in different ports.

EU fisheries ministers meeting in Brussels endorsed a European

Commission proposal that would force fishermen to bring [sharks](#) to port intact. The [European Parliament](#) must now take up the proposal.

While shark finning is forbidden in EU waters and vessels, the ministers said in a statement, "the still possible processing on board has cast doubts about the effectiveness of controls."

Asia's taste for [shark fin soup](#) is viewed as a key threat to sharks, with marine protection groups saying up to 73 million are killed annually to satisfy demand for the delicacy.

EU nations combined account for the second-largest share, with 14 percent of the world's catches.

Slow to grow and with very few young per birth, sharks are exceptionally vulnerable with several dozen species threatened with extinction.

"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, fins in particular," the EU ministers said.

Shark finning has also increased due to a strong demand for traditional medical cures in Asia, the ministers added.

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