

New Caledonia bans shark fishing

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An aerial view of the Mangrove of the French Pacific island territory of New Caledonia, in September 2006. The government of the Pacific paradise of New Caledonia said Wednesday it had decided to ban fishing of sharks, which are being decimated to feed growing demand for luxury goods.

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"New Caledonia took the decision to ban the fishing, capture, detention

or commercialisation of all species of sharks" in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—an area roughly the size of South Africa, authorities in the French territory said.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), humans kill about 100 million sharks each year, mostly for their fins, which are used for expensive, luxury soups in China.

Conservationists warn that dozens of species are under threat. Over the past 100 years, 90 percent of the world's sharks have disappeared, mostly because of overfishing, the FAO says.

Shark-fin soup was once a luxury enjoyed just by China's elite, but as the country's 1.3 billion people have grown wealthier and incorporated it into their festivities, [shark populations](#) have been increasingly decimated.

The government of New Caledonia also banned so-called "shark-feeding", a popular adrenalin-fuelled tourist activity that consists in giving food to the animals to observe them from a close vantage point.

The territory joins other countries in the region to have created shark sanctuaries, including [French Polynesia](#), Palau and Cook Islands.

"Asian flotillas don't come to New Caledonia's EEZ but this will stop any attempt to do so. It's a really good decision, as it affects all species," said Thea Jacob of the WWF.

New Caledonia's decision joins a growing trend of protecting [shark species](#) worldwide, despite opposition from countries such as Japan and China that support shark fishing.

Last month, a decision to restrict exports of the [oceanic whitetip shark](#),

the porbeagle, three types of hammerhead and the manta ray won final approval by the 178-member Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

The species now join the [great white shark](#), the whale shark and the basking shark, which already enjoy international trade controls.

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