

The Global Shark Fin Trade – How Domestic and International Laws are Impacting Shark Fishing Activities.

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Outline

- ▶ Shark biology and life history
- ▶ Conservation status
- ▶ What is shark finning?
- ▶ Top countries/species in the shark fin trade
- ▶ Legislation
- ▶ Recommendations for future management

Shark Biology (most species)

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- ▶ Slow growth rates
- ▶ Late age-at-maturity
- ▶ Low fecundity



Conservation Status

- ▶ The U.S. considers many sharks to be sustainably managed within their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (unless they are provided protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) or Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- ▶ Although, many countries participate in shark fishing activities, the shark fin trade is predominantly located throughout Asia and the Pacific islands (Jaiteh et al. 2017).
- ▶ Hong Kong, China and Vietnam are established hubs for the shark fin trade, which acts as a major component of their economy.

What is shark finning?

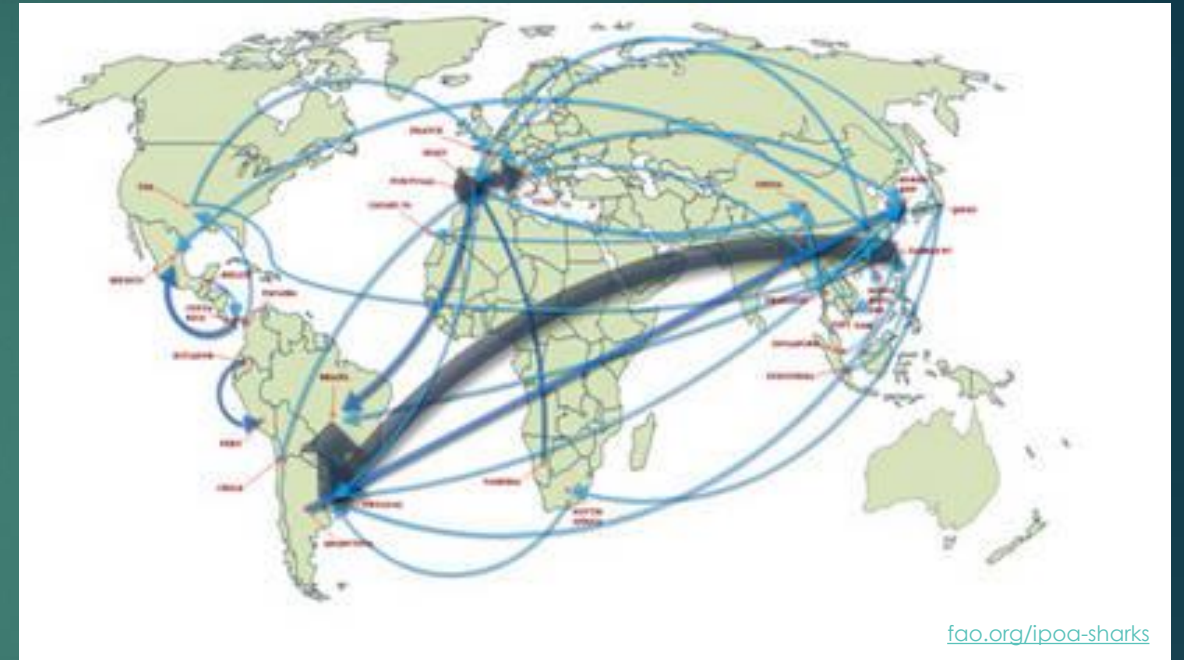
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Top Countries Involved in Fin Trade

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Shark fin trade routes

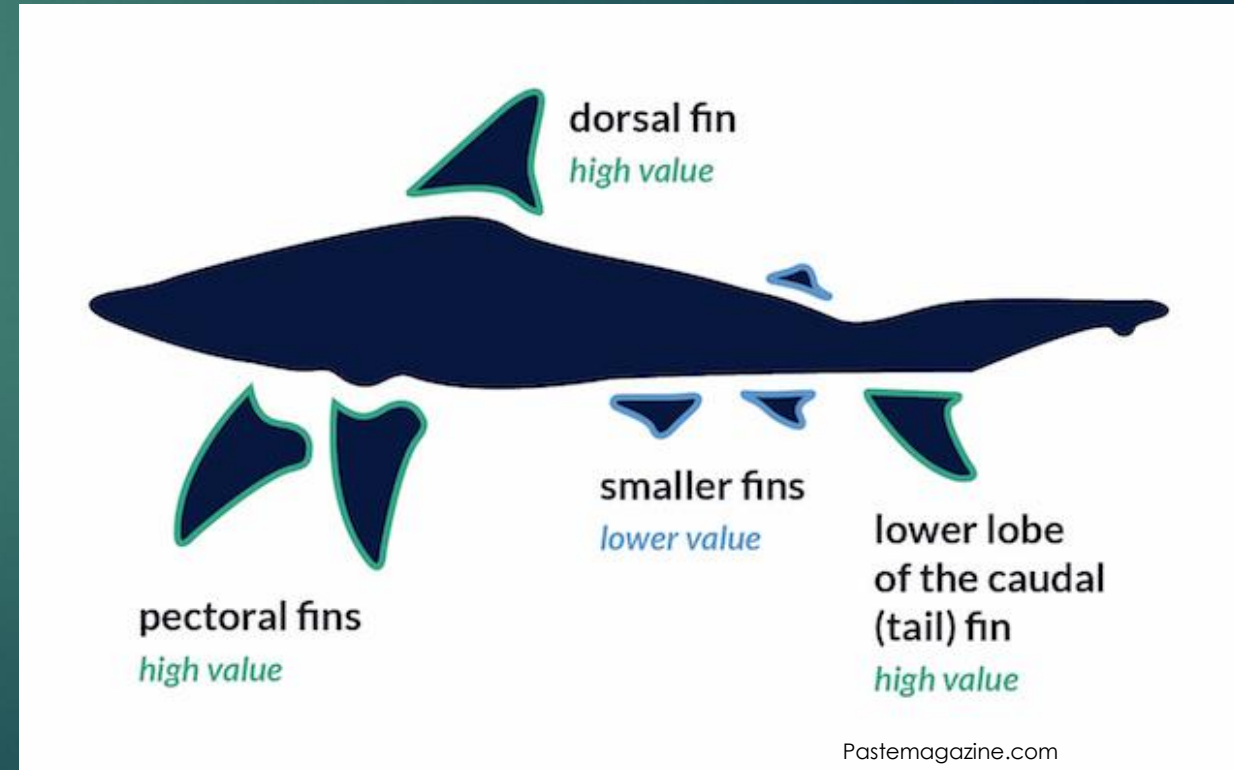


Trade of other shark parts (non-fin)

Top Species Involved in Fin Trade

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1. Hammerhead sharks
2. Sandbar sharks
3. Oceanic whitetip sharks
4. Many reef sharks (whitetip, grey and blacktip)
5. Blue sharks
6. Thresher sharks



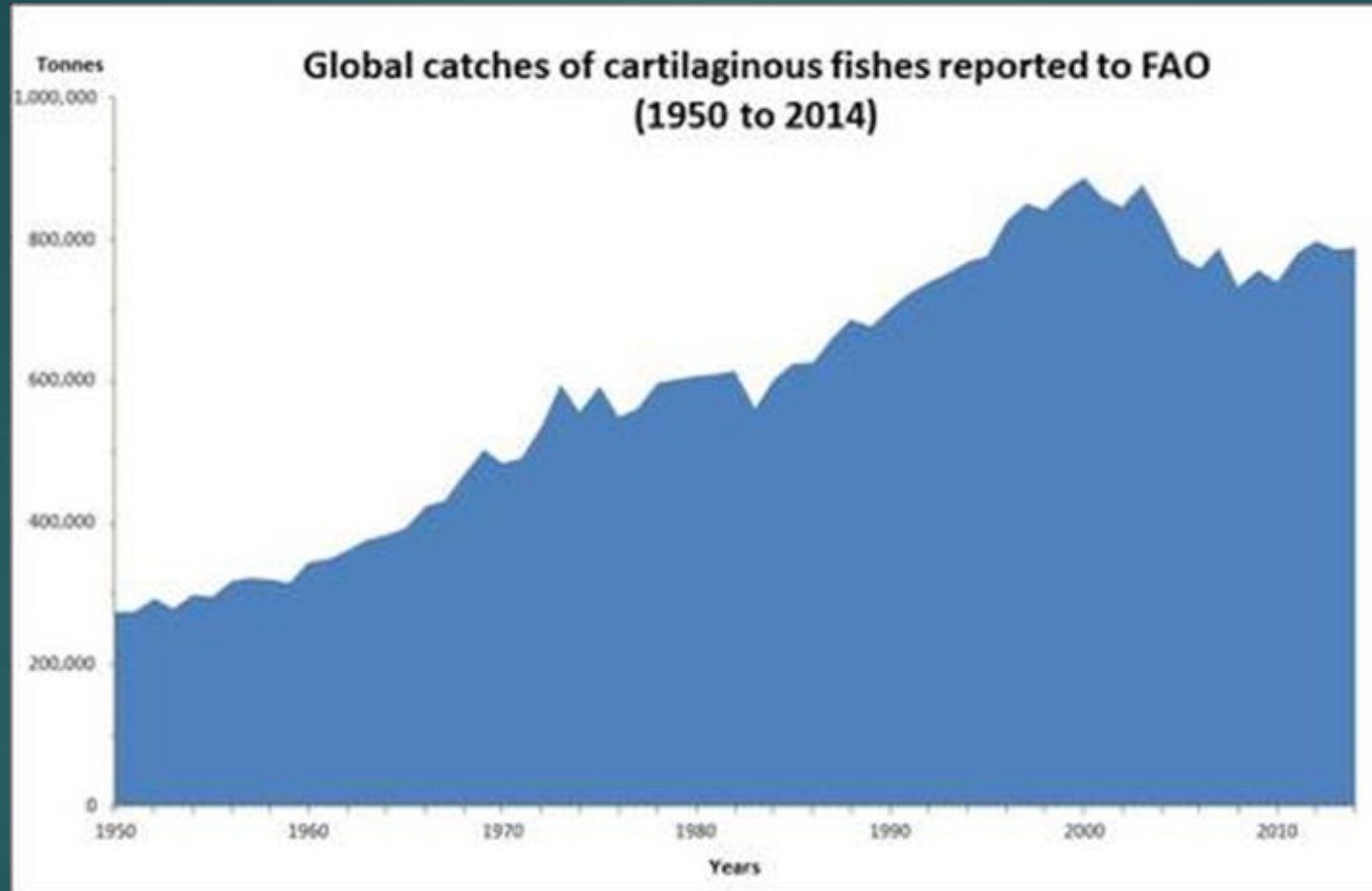
Domestic Oversight

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- ▶ Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act of 2017
 - Criminalizes any ownership or trade of shark fins throughout the U.S.
- ▶ Shark Finning Prohibition Act of 2000
 - Amendment to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act that banned shark finning throughout our territorial waters and any U.S. flagged vessels.
- ▶ A multitude of states and companies have taken up shark fin bans (AWI 2019).

Global FAO Fishing Trends

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This figure from the United Nations FAO site displays a clear drop off in cartilaginous fish catches after 2004. It is unclear if this is related to conservation efforts, enacted legislation or a reduction in shark fin demand (FAO 2019).

International Oversight

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- ▶ North America, Europe, Australia, UAE and many African/South American countries have banned shark finning (AWI 2019).
- ▶ Many of these countries have agreements to oversee and enforce these regulations in ports and territorial waters.
- ▶ Although it's nearly impossible to oversee all these waters, the collaboration of these nations is key to future success.
- ▶ Example: The United Nations has the International Plan of Action for Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks).

International Oversight (Cont.)

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- ▶ Some countries still partake in shark finning - either by finning practices or after market sales of only their fins (Shea and To 2017).
- ▶ China, Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam and other Pacific Islands still treat shark fins as a legal fishing commodity.



Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fisheries

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- ▶ As we have seen, not all nations treat shark finning as a crime. Many eastern nations still rely on this practice for cultural significance and a large boost to the economy.
- ▶ Therefore, not all shark finning practices are considered IUU fishing.
- ▶ Some international and domestic legislation tends to promote more IUU fishing where these coastal communities rely on this economic boost from the shark fin trade (Jaiteh et al. 2017).

Recommendations



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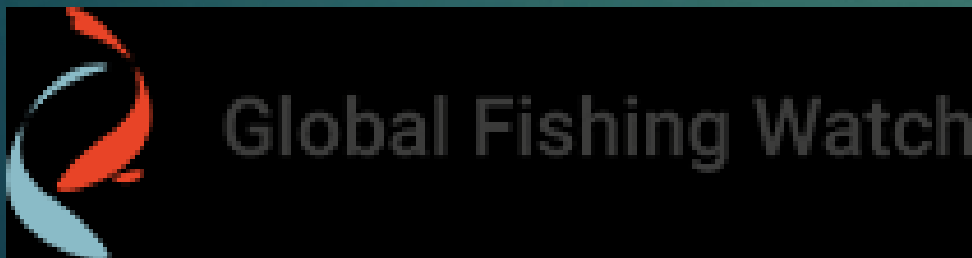
- ▶ Some of my research landed the answer to this as changing the cultural significance of shark fin soup as a delicacy to these nations (Ferrette et al. 2019).
- ▶ Cultural changes are very challenging tasks to accomplish. Thus, modifications to fisheries management, expanding technology and sustainable harvesting should allow for better conservation of sharks and marine ecosystems.

Recommendations (Cont.)

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► Technology

- Many coastal communities are relying on agreements between nations to deter shark finning activities (FAO 2019).
- Some nations are using vessel monitoring systems (Global Fishing Watch) or cooperative oversight systems (FISH-i Africa) to crackdown on illegal fishing.



Recommendations (Cont.)

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► Sustainable Harvesting

- The U.S. is a leader in sustainable fishing practices (Shiffman and Hueter 2017).
- Some researchers are recommending that other nations should follow in our footsteps.
- Global priority
- The change from shark finning to shark fishing is much needed for the survival of these species, as well as healthier ecosystems (Passantino 2014).

Recommendations (Cont.)

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- Fisheries Management
 - Reduce the global demand
 - Education and outreach
 - Centralize the ports that accept legal shark fins - Hong Kong, China, Yemen and Vietnam.





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Documentation of a large seizure of shark fins that had been illegally harvested. Millions for the bail out – another small step towards eliminating IUU fishing operations (FISH-i Africa)

References

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