



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Call for evidence on the scale of Shark Fin Trade in the UK and possible impacts of stricter controls

December 2020

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

sharks@defra.gov.uk

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Foreword

The UK has a strong track record in marine conservation and places great importance on ensuring that appropriate protection and management is in place for all shark species. Following the end of the Transition period we will explore further options consistent with World Trade Organisation rules to address the trade of shark fins. In relation to this we are asking for evidence which will help us to better understand the trade of shark fins and its impacts both in the UK and overseas. We will use the evidence gathered to inform whether any further action is required to address any unsustainable and/or negative consequences of shark fin trade.

Executive summary

We are seeking evidence and analysis which will inform decision making. This might, but not exclusively, include the impacts on biodiversity, environmental, social and economic sustainability and any unintended consequences nationally or internationally. Evidence can come in many forms, including numerical data, case studies, literature reviews, personal experiences, or reports and documents, whether new or historic. Please provide full references for any documentation discussed.

We are looking for expert advice on the following four key areas:

- scale of shark fin trade in the UK
- conservation impacts of shark fin trade in the UK
- economic, social and cultural impacts of further restrictions on shark fin trade in the UK
- international issues

This call for evidence is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office “Consultation Principles” and be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

If you have any comments or complaints about the process, please email:

consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

Confidentiality and data protection

Contributing to the call for evidence means that information provided, including personal data, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (in particular the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018). We have obligations to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, as a public authority, Defra is bound by the access to information regimes referred to above and may therefore be obliged to disclose all or some of the information you provide. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

About you

Question 1: What is your name?

Question 2: What is your email address?

Question 3: What is your organisation?

If you're replying as an individual, please type 'individual'

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and where relevant who else they have consulted in formulating their responses.

Question 4: Would you like your response to be confidential (required)

Scale of shark fin trade in the UK

Trade in shark fins and other shark products must adhere to trade controls that are in place for certain species of sharks under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). These can prohibit the trade in particular species or require trade to be carefully regulated, including through additional assessments of sustainability. Currently there are 46 species of sharks and rays listed on CITES.

For species that are not CITES listed, shark fins can be legally imported to and exported from the UK without a permit. There is also retained EU legislation, known as the personal

import allowance, which allows individuals travelling to the UK to carry 20kg of dried shark fins for personal consumption

Shark finning is the practice of removing fins of a shark at sea and returning the finless body to the water. The UK government is strongly opposed to shark finning and has already banned the practice. UK and EU fishing vessels have observed strict rules of landing sharks with fins naturally attached since 2013¹. Shark finning has been banned by about 70 individual nations and by all relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). Where finning bans are enforced, shark fins can generally be legally traded after having been detached from the shark on shore. We acknowledge that shark finning still takes place in some parts of the world, and it is not always possible to trace shark fins in circulation back to their source.

We would like to understand, in detail, the scale of imports and exports of shark fins in the UK.

Question 5: Please provide any evidence you have of the amount and value of shark fins entering and leaving the UK, including through the personal import allowance, and which shark species these are derived from.

We are particularly interested in information about shark fins which do not currently require a CITES import or export permit.

Question 6: Please provide any evidence you have to assist our understanding of the number and size of companies and the number of jobs, and in which sectors, supported by the movement of shark fins between the UK and other countries.

Include, where possible, the relative importance of shark fin trade to these businesses and jobs when compared to other fishing-related activities and non-fishing activities.

Conservation impacts of shark fin trade

We recognise that there are conservation impacts caused by overfishing of some species of sharks being targeted for their fins (e.g. thresher sharks and hammerhead sharks).

Question 7: Please provide any evidence you have on the impacts on species conservation of the import and export of shark fins to and from the UK.

Question 8: Are there greater conservation impacts from the import and export of shark fins to and from the UK on some species than others?

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32003R1185&from=en>

Economic, social and cultural impacts of further restrictions on shark fin trade in the UK

We would like to understand the potential scale of economic, social and cultural impacts of further restrictions on UK fisheries, businesses and individuals. We would particularly like to understand if there are any areas or communities that may be particularly affected.

Question 9: How would stricter controls on the import and export of shark fins affect businesses (e.g. importing and exporting companies, fishing industry etc.)?

For example, we are interested in the potential magnitude of impacts, and types of businesses.

Question 10: Please provide any evidence you have on what shark fins are used for in the UK and what the impact of stricter controls on the import and export of shark fins would be on consumers and individuals?

For example, are there any social, cultural or economic impacts? Would some individuals, groups or communities be more affected than others?

International issues

We recognise that a change in the UK's policy in relation to the import and export of shark fins may have an impact on other countries and possibly on the livelihoods of their people (referred to as local livelihoods below). We would like further information on these impacts.

In addition, we understand that some countries have imposed bans or stricter measures on imports of shark fins, such as Canada who have banned the import and export of shark fins that are not naturally attached to a carcass.

Question 11: Please provide any evidence of the impact that import and export of shark fins to and from the UK has on supporting local livelihoods in other countries.

Question 12: We are interested in finding out more about other countries' restrictions on the import or export of shark fins. Please provide any information and/or evidence that you are aware of on this.

Question 13: Please provide any evidence on the effect additional restrictions on the trade in shark fins could have in the context of global shark conservation efforts.

Further evidence

If there is additional evidence you have that you feel does not fit under any of the previous questions, please submit in response to the question below.

Question 14: Please provide any other relevant evidence you would like to include in considerations for imposing stricter controls on shark fin trade in the UK.

How to respond

We ask that any responses be sent by **04 January 2021** using the online portal at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/shark-and-cetacean-conservation/call-for-evidence-on-uk-shark-fin-trade>